

EXECUTIVE SESSION
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INTERVIEW OF: SUSAN RICE

Wednesday, September 8, 2017

Washington, D.C.

The interview in the above matter was held in Room HVC-304, the Capitol, commencing at 9:51 a.m.

Present: Representatives Conaway, King, Rooney, Stewart, Gowdy, Stefanik, Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Carson, Speier, Quigley, Swalwell, Castro, and

[REDACTED]

Heck.

Appearances:

For the PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

For SUSAN RICE:

KATHRYN RUEMMLER, ESQ.

NICK MCQUAID, ESQ.

LATHAM & WATKINS

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Good morning.

This is a transcribed interview of Ambassador Rice.

Thank you for speaking to us today.

For the record, I am [REDACTED], [REDACTED] I for the staff of the majority side of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. There's a number of other individuals in the room, who will identify themselves as the interview proceeds.

Before we begin, I wanted to state a few things for the record.

The questioning will be conducted by members and staff. During the course of this interview, members and staff may ask questions during their allotted time period. Some questions may seem basic, but that is because we need to clearly establish facts and understand the situation. Please do not assume we know any facts you have previously disclosed as part of any other investigation or review.

During the course of this interview, we'll take any breaks that you desire. We ask that you give complete and fulsome replies to questions based on your best recollections.

Right now, we are cleared for the Top Secret/SCI level, but please let us know if your answers require you to speak to information classified at a different level, and we'll make the necessary arrangements beyond that, if necessary.

If a question is unclear or you are uncertain in your response, please let us know. And if you do not know the answer to a question or cannot remember, simply say so.

You are entitled to have counsel present for this interview, and I see that

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

you have brought so. If counsel could please identify themselves for the record.

MS. RUEMMLER: Sure. Kathryn Ruemmler from Latham & Watkins, on behalf of Ambassador Rice.

MR. MCQUAID: And Nick McQuaid from Latham & Watkins.

[REDACTED] Thank you.

This interview will be transcribed. As you can see, there is a reporter making a record of these proceedings so we can easily consult the written compilation of your answers. Because the reporter cannot record gestures, we ask that you answer verbally. If you forget to do this, you might be reminded to do so. You may also be asked to spell certain terms or unusual phrases.

Consistent with the committee's rules of procedure, you and your counsel, if you wish, will have a reasonable opportunity to inspect the transcript of this interview in order to determine whether your answers were correctly transcribed. The transcript will remain in the committee's custody. The committee also reserves the right to request your return for additional questions should the need arise.

The process for the interview is as follows. The majority will be given 60 minutes to ask questions, and the minority will be given 60 minutes to ask questions. Immediately thereafter, we will take a 5-minute break if you so desire, after which the majority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions and the minority will be given 15 minutes to ask questions until we reach the hard stop.

These time limits will be strictly adhered to by all sides, with no extensions being granted. Time will be kept for each portion of the interview, with warnings given at the 5- and 1-minute marks respectively.

To ensure confidentiality, we ask that you do not discuss the interview with

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

anyone other than your attorneys here today.

Our record today will also reflect that you have not been compelled to appear. You are reminded that it is unlawful to deliberately provide false information to Members of Congress or staff.

And, lastly, the record will reflect that you're voluntarily participating in this interview under oath. And, Madam Ambassador, if you would raise your right hand now to be sworn.

Madam Ambassador, do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

MS. RICE: I do.

[REDACTED] Thank you, ma'am.

At this time, I'll turn it over.

Mr. Chairman?

MR. ROONEY: My name is Tom Rooney. I'm from Florida. I'm here with Chairman Mike Conaway and Trey Gowdy from South Carolina on behalf of the majority. Mr. Schiff is the ranking member on the minority, as you know.

I'll be asking the first set of questions, but I also was asked to go over the parameters of what this whole investigation is about.

Chairman Nunes and Ranking Member Schiff have approved the scope of investigation for the inquiry by this committee into the Russian active measures campaign targeting the 2016 U.S. election.

While the detailed, six-page scoping document remains classified, the investigation will seek to answer the following questions: What Russia cyber activity and other active measures were directed against the United States and its allies? Did the Russian active measures include links between Russia and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

individuals associated with political campaigns or other U.S. persons? What was the U.S. Government's response to the Russian active measures? And what do we need to do to protect ourselves and our allies in the future? And what possible leaks of classified information took place related to the Intelligence Community assessment of these matters?

So, basically, as you can imagine, our responsibility here is to try to make the Intelligence Community do a better job when it comes to protecting ourselves. And so hopefully you will be able to share your insight and your expertise in these matters and be able to allow us to write a report that hopefully is unified and that we can share with the Intelligence Community moving forward.

My questions are pretty straightforward, and then I'll turn it over to Mr. Gowdy. I'd like to ask you some questions specifically with regard to unmasking.

MS. RICE: Excuse me, do I need to turn on the microphone?

[REDACTED] Yes, Madam Ambassador, please, if you could push the button.

MR. ROONEY: There you go.

I know that you're familiar with the process requesting U.S. persons to be unmasked. I know you are familiar with that process. So I wanted to ask you, when you wanted to make an unmasking request, what was your process for when you were the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. when you went about making that request? What was your process in unmasking?

MS. RUEMLER: If I could just ask a point of clarification before Ambassador Rice answers the question. Is it the committee's position that that question is within the scope of these four questions that you previously read for

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the record?

MR. ROONEY: I think that, with regard to the possible leaks of classified information that took place with regard to the Intelligence Community assessment, I think that that's what we're trying to get at.

MS. RUEMLER: Yes, okay, but the Intelligence Community assessment related to Russian interference with the 2016 election, correct?

MR. ROONEY: Correct.

MS. RUEMLER: So, at that time, Ambassador Rice was the National Security Advisor. She was not, you know, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. So I'm not sure I understand how that question is within the scope.

MR. ROONEY: One of the things that -- and I'll let others chime in here too, but one of the things that I'd personally be interested in is, when you're making an unmasking request, we've seen from some of the other witnesses that we've talked to and in full committee that with regard to certain agencies and certain people their request was more specific and others was more broad. And we're trying to get an idea of whether or not the ones that are too broad need to be more specific, not with regard to what was right or wrong. Because, clearly, there was no guidance as to whether or not, you know, one way was better than the other. So when we're writing our report to try to improve the Intelligence Community's ability to do these things, should it be more specific.

And so, when I ask this first question of the Ambassador, of what was her practice at the U.N. and then maybe as compared to as National Security Advisor, it was, is there a difference.

And that's the line of questioning that I'm about to get into. And I understand what you're saying, but, I mean, it's more of, you know, sort of a

[REDACTED]

technique thing. And so --

MS. RUEMLER: Okay.

MR. SCHIFF: Would the gentleman yield for a moment?

MR. ROONEY: Yeah.

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Conaway and I have discussed how to divide the Russia investigation from the unmasking inquiry that the chairman is doing on his own initiative. And we discussed that in connection with Ambassador Rice's testimony. And I think our discussion was that she was going to be asked questions about the Russia investigation, and that's why she was being brought in under the auspices of the Russia investigation; that if Mr. Nunes wanted to ask questions about the unmasking, that would be done as part of the unmasking inquiry.

So I would think that, unless this deals with the Russia investigation, kind of generic unmasking questions ought be saved for what Chairman Nunes is doing. At least that was my understanding of what we had discussed.

Mr. Conaway, that's not your understanding?

MR. CONAWAY: Let's go off the record.

[Discussion off the record.]

MR. CONAWAY: Back on the record.

If the witness chooses to answer, the witness chooses to answer. If she doesn't want to answer, she doesn't want to answer. We get 15 minutes to ask questions; you get 15 minutes to ask questions. And we'll just go at it like that.

MR. SCHIFF: Okay.

MR. ROONEY: Just to be clear, there is a little bit of overlap with what I'm trying to lay some groundwork here for and some of the questions that I have with

regard to Russia and unmasking. So if you don't want to answer the broader foundation questions, that's fine, but the questions that I had do specifically deal with Russia and unmasking.

So I don't know what your side agreement was with -- that you think that it was with Mr. Conaway, but I think that it's within the scope of what the four bullets here are that you had with Chairman Nunes. So, again, I mean, you can --

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Rooney, you're operating in good faith, and I completely appreciate that. And hopefully these questions will be mostly about Russia, because that was --

MR. ROONEY: I will try to separate them out as best I can.

And, counsel, if you're uncomfortable with me, with any of the foundation questions, then, you know --

MS. RUEMLER: Well, just let me be clear. I asked a clarifying question about the scope of this proceeding today. I didn't raise an objection. I didn't instruct the witness, you know, not to answer the question.

What I do want to make clear is, she is prepared to answer these questions, whether they're, you know, table setting, do not directly relate to Russia. However, she's going to answer them one time. She's not going to come back up here for a separate unmasking inquiry. So I just want to make that record very clear.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. Okay.

Ambassador, I'm trying to sift through some of these questions. So I'm just going to ask them again. I mean, if you object, then you object, but I would like to continue. And a lot of these are "yes" or "no" answers.

Do you know roughly how often you would make requests for U.S. person

information? And, specifically, do you recall making more requests when you were the Ambassador of the U.N. versus the NSC?

MS. RICE: I think it'd be helpful for me to try to begin by explaining the process and what I experienced as National Security Advisor.

MR. ROONEY: Please do.

MS. RICE: And then I'm happy, for context, to try to make comparisons to when I was U.N. Ambassador.

As National Security Advisor, I received a daily intelligence briefing 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday. I had an Intelligence Community briefer assigned to me for a period of a year, roughly, and that person every morning would bring me my briefing materials.

On an average day, I received somewhere between 20 and 30 pieces of intelligence. That would include the elements of the PDB, that would include SIGINT, that would include HUMINT, that would include GEOINT, and it would include finished products from the IC on various topics.

Over the course of a month, I received a relatively small number of reports that contained minimized U.S. person identities. And when and if I thought it was necessary for me to understand completely and thoroughly the import of a particular report to request the identity of a U.S. person, I would do so. I can't give you precise numbers of how frequently that was, either when I was National Security Advisor or when I was U.N. Ambassador, now going back almost 9 years to the beginning of that time.

But what I can say is, as National Security Advisor, I took very seriously my role as a consumer of intelligence, as a principal adviser to the President, as the person responsible for convening the principals committee meetings on every

[REDACTED]

national security topic of significance, and I read my daily briefings thoroughly and scrupulously.

And I felt it was important, if the IC had deemed a report significant enough to provide to me in the first place -- and they're selecting, by definition, a narrow subset of the universe of what they could provide me -- as something that they thought I needed to see, then I thought it was important for me to thoroughly understand it.

And there were occasions when I received reports on a wide range of subjects that, in order to understand it more precisely and thoroughly, I thought it was necessary to ask for that identity. That would be a request that I would make directly to my briefer. The briefer would take my request back to the agency that originated the report. That agency would decide whether or not they would provide that identity. It would come back to me, orally only, through my briefer, 24, 48 hours, sometimes 72 hours later.

So that was the process that I experienced as National Security Advisor. It was roughly the same as U.N. Ambassador. Obviously, I would have received a somewhat different selection of intelligence materials as U.N. Ambassador, although always the PDB and the things that came up in the principals committee meetings because I was a member of the principals committee meetings as U.N. Ambassador. But I had a broader set of responsibilities as National Security Advisor.

MR. ROONEY: If you could give us, like, a generic example of what would sort of pique your interest as to why you would have to know the identity. Not specifically, just generically. Like, what would you see that would make you say that I need to know who that person is?

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: I could give you various types of examples.

MR. ROONEY: Yes.

MS. RICE: But, for example, if there was a report that suggested that a U.S. person was engaged in transferring technology that was either in violation of import and export control responsibilities or laws or could have been used in a way that might damage U.S. persons or U.S. interests, it would be important to know, for example, is this somebody significant with the capacity and the means to transfer that material to a hostile government, or was this somebody, you know, playing around on the Internet who really didn't know or have such material.

Another example might be if, you know, I saw information that suggests that a U.S. person was purporting to convey or undermine information regarding U.S. policy -- undermine U.S. policy by conveying information, or was conducting some kind of independent policy role, that would concern me, because we have one government at a time. We have to be very careful about how we communicate with foreign partners, whether friendly or adversarial. And so that might be an example of when such information were of interest.

I could go on, but those are two generic examples.

MR. ROONEY: Yeah. I have a couple others that I'll talk to you about. But was there, like, a discernible difference between when you were U.N. Ambassador and with the NSC that you would notice sort of, like, trends and differences of when you would ask for unmasking? Or was it sort of the same ground rules that you would have with regard to -- were there any differences at the U.N. versus the NSC?

MS. RICE: Well, I think the same principles apply. One respects the importance of preserving confidentiality of U.S. persons. One asks those

[REDACTED]

identities only when necessary to understand the import of a report. That, at least, was my approach.

But I wouldn't hesitate if I thought it was necessary for me to understand what I was receiving and to do my job as National Security Advisor effectively. Obviously, I sought to do my job as U.N. Ambassador as effectively as possible.

I did, as I said earlier, receive a different -- somewhat different, not entirely different, but somewhat different, universe of materials than my daily intelligence take as U.N. Ambassador. I received a broader selection as National Security Advisor.

MR. ROONEY: Did you have a designated staffer who would process that request? And if you did, would their rationale for requesting unmasking be any different than yours?

MS. RICE: No, I had no staffers involved in this process. I spoke, as I said, directly to my briefer, both as National Security Advisor and as U.N. Ambassador. And I was usually with my briefer in a one-on-one context.

MR. ROONEY: What would you say as far as what sharing information of unmasked persons with, say, the media or leaking classified material would mean for our ability to gather intelligence and for national security purposes? Would you say that that would be harmful?

MS. RICE: Not only would it be harmful, it's illegal. It's not something I ever did. And I think, to the extent that classified material, whether unmasked identities or other forms of classified material, are provided to the media, it's extremely damaging.

MR. ROONEY: Do you ever recall being denied a request, in either of your two roles, for a person to be unmasked?

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: I do. I can't recall exactly the specifics, but, yes, in the course of my 8 years of service in the Obama administration and indeed during my service in the Clinton administration as Assistant Secretary of State For African Affairs, as Senior Director For African Affairs, I do recall having been denied.

MR. ROONEY: Do you recall ever requesting somebody to be unmasked on behalf of somebody else?

MS. RICE: No, I never recall such a thing.

MR. ROONEY: And then, finally, on these foundation questions, have you ever personally or through an intermediary shared classified information with individuals who are not authorized to view such information?

MS. RICE: I have no recollection of ever sharing classified information with the media.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

Specifically with regard to an article, which I think that you were provided with, it was a New York Times article that -- basically, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Do you know this article?

MS. RICE: What do you mean I was provided with it, sir?

MR. ROONEY: They weren't?

MS. RICE: I haven't received --

MR. ROONEY: Are you familiar with this article?

MS. RICE: I would need a little more specifics, if you don't mind.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

Moving on to -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Do you recall this?

MS. RUEMLER: We were provided the opportunity to review this particular intelligence report this morning. That was after the representations had been made to us by staff that Ambassador Rice would not be shown any documents. Nevertheless, she's prepared to answer questions about it this morning.

MR. ROONEY: Okay. This is just general with regard to this U.S. person.

I --

MS. RUEMLER: Yeah. I would also note it's far afield from anything having to do with the Russian interference in the 2016 election. But she's prepared to answer the question.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: Sir, if I might just ask, we had the opportunity to see these documents very briefly before coming in. I do not have them in front of me. Do you have them that you can share?

[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Yeah, I'll give you this one here.

MS. RICE: You all remain in possession of them. Thank you.

MR. ROONEY: This is, again, just to sort of try to get to a specific example where you [REDACTED] sort of give us an idea of, like, why this [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Well, let me begin by saying that, prior to the provision of this document, I didn't recall this particular report. It does ring a vague bell, having reviewed it just recently.

I can share with you the context and what -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Here, my question or concern, if I did ask [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and I will defer to your information on that, because I don't have a

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

specific recollection, but I might well have, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We have one government at a time. I took very seriously our responsibility, up until noon on January 20th, to do our best to advance U.S. interests and protect our security. And when -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

And this was something that, frankly, worried me and, I think, other administration officials in this window. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: But to your recollection with regard to this or any of these other examples that, you know, somebody may bring up, these unmaskings were not used in any way for political purposes, like, to share with a political opponent -- I'm just asking. I mean --

MS. RICE: Absolutely not.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: Any unmaskings that I -- I'm sorry. I don't like that term, if you'll forgive me. Any requests for the identities of U.S. persons that I made as

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

National Security Advisor or U.N. Ambassador I did to understand the information I was being provided to execute effectively my responsibilities as the National Security Advisor or U.N. Ambassador.

I never shared that information with other people, to my recollection. I certainly never shared classified information. And I had no and would not have any political motive. I don't even understand, to be honest, how you could construe a political intent from something like this. I don't know -- how does that work?

MR. ROONEY: Well, let me ask you a few more questions. This is with regard to trying to tie that with Russia and what hopefully our investigation leads us to.

MS. RICE: I hope we will get to Russia, by the way, because --

MR. ROONEY: Yeah.

MS. RICE: -- that's the important issue here.

MR. ROONEY: And, I mean, you know, just because I'm asking these questions is not any kind of a leading inference that there was, you know, one -- but, obviously, you know, just being involved in politics, that allegations are made about a whole bunch of things.

So with regard to --

MS. RUEMLER: Just for clarity of the record, given this is transcribed, may I suggest that we mark this particular intelligence report as an exhibit?

MR. ROONEY: Yeah. Sure.

MS. RUEMLER: Exhibit 1 I guess we can call it.

[Rice Exhibit No. 1

was marked for identification.]

[REDACTED]

Do you know if the Obama administration sought to broadly disseminate this information across the government? Are you aware of that?

What I do know, however, is that when the President in December requested that the Intelligence Community produce the ICA, as it came to be, the purpose of which was to compile and preserve for Congress, for the next administration, and for the public what we knew at the end of the administration about Russian interference in the election, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was not a directive, as the report in The New York Times suggested, to my knowledge, from the White House to anybody to preserve and disseminate documents.

MR. ROONEY: Mr. Gowdy.

MR. GOWDY: Good morning, Ambassador.

I want to try to thread the needle between your counsel's jurisdictional concerns, which I think are legitimate. We want to stay within the confines of what we've been scoped to do. And we're going to get to Russia, I promise you, shortly.

But I'm not interested, from a factual standpoint, in -- forgive me for using the term "unmasking." We use it all the time. You prefer another phrase.

MS. RICE: Deminimization or a request an identity.

MR. GOWDY: I'm probably not going to remember that phrase --

MS. RICE: That's okay.

MR. GOWDY: -- so forgive me if I don't say it correctly.

But I'm not interested, from a factual standpoint, for the identity of a U.S. person that you requested when you were the U.N. Ambassador. But you are one of the very few people on the face of the Earth who's ever been the U.N. Ambassador, so I'm very interested in how you viewed your role to the extent that you have successors and will continue to have successors. You have one right now, used to be the Governor of my home State. So I am interested in how you viewed your role and generally how you viewed requests for U.S. person information when you had that title.

So I'm not going to ask you about anything specific. I'm not interested in anything specific. But I am interested in whether or not you viewed your role as

[REDACTED]

changing when you went to become the National Security Advisor, whether you would have made similar requests, different requests as you transitioned from one role to another.

So, with that background, how did you view requests for U.S. person information when you were the Ambassador to the U.N.?

MS. RICE: Well, I tried to answer that, but let me try again.

MR. GOWDY: All right.

MS. RICE: First of all, as U.N. Ambassador in the Obama administration and in previous Democratic administrations and now similarly in the Trump administration with Ambassador Haley, the U.N. Ambassador has been designated a member of the National Security Council Principals Committee.

So, as U.N. Ambassador, I had two distinct, broad responsibilities: one, obviously, first and foremost, representing the United States to the United Nations, to the world, representing our policy, negotiating in the Security Council and the General Assembly, speaking publicly on behalf of the United States.

In addition, I sat as a full member of the principals committee with my own voice and vote. I had a representative who spoke for me in the deputies committee as well. And so I participated in virtually every significant policy decision taken by the Obama administration in the national security realm over the course of 8 years, including my 4-1/2 years as U.N. Ambassador.

I also had responsibility for running a mission of U.S. personnel

So I had, as U.N. Ambassador, a broader range of responsibilities than I think perhaps the average person understands.

[REDACTED]

So I would read, as I said, in the context of the intelligence briefing that I received, reports that were provided to me -- obviously, everything is selected for me in both roles -- that was relevant to my work as the U.S. Ambassador negotiating with the other members of the Security Council or the General Assembly on a day-to-day basis. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I would also receive a selection of reports that related to the broader national security agenda -- issues that might arise in the principals committee, issues that were on the U.N. agenda, issues of broad interest and that other principals were receiving.

So that would be the contents of my take. And if, in reading my take as U.N. Ambassador, whether it was a report that was more relevant to my negotiations at the U.N. or my responsibilities at the principals' table, I felt it was necessary to request the identity of a U.S. person in order to understand the import of a report, I would do so.

As National Security Advisor, obviously, I had a different set of responsibilities. I was the President's principal adviser. I was the chairperson of the principals committee. I was the person responsible for integrating and coordinating and brokering U.S. national security policy decisions. So my responsibilities included defense, they included intel, they included diplomacy, they included budget, I mean, you name it, everything that you could broadly construe as relevant to national security.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So my take was different. I had very few of the kinds of reports that I would have seen relevant to negotiations in the Security Council, though some, on occasion, on hot-button issues, and more on the broader swath of national security information.

And, again, I applied the same criteria, but my responsibilities were different. I was responsible directly to the President. I was responsible to the principals. I coordinated the agencies. And I was particularly sensitive to any information that implicated a potential threat to the United States, to our personnel, to our interests.

And, to that extent, my responsibilities and the pressures on me were different as National Security Advisor than they might have been as U.N. Ambassador.

Does that help you to understand the difference?

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am.

Do you believe you would have made more requests for U.S. persons' information as the U.N. Ambassador or as the National Security Advisor?

MS. RICE: I can't be precise in making that judgment. I don't recall the numbers. But I would suspect that I would have had more reports that came to me with minimized information as National Security Advisor, and I may have had more reason as National Security Advisor to request the identities of U.S. persons.

But without, you know, being able to go back and refresh my memory as to, you know, the universe of material that I saw -- again, 20 to 30 reports a day over 6 days a week -- over 8 years, I can't give you precision on that.

MR. GOWDY: Before we go to Russia -- I promise I'm two questions away -- for those of us who have never served in the roles that you have served

[REDACTED]

and are new to HPSCI, it might strike some as curious why an Ambassador to the United Nations would have more requests to identify U.S. persons than the head of the CIA, the NSA. I guess I'm trying to understand why the U.N. Ambassador would have a unique need for information that other agency heads would not have made.

MS. RICE: Well, sir, you're --

MR. GOWDY: And I get the U.N. --

MS. RICE: -- implying a bunch of assumptions that I'm not privy to. So I don't know the numbers of requests that I made. I don't know the numbers of requests that any other member of the principals committee made. So I don't want to speak with certainty on that topic. I don't know the number I made as U.N. Ambassador relative to the number I made as National Security Advisor. I don't have access to that information.

What I can say is that, as U.N. Ambassador, I had responsibilities that spanned participating in the principals committee meetings and representing the United States to the world, and I took those responsibilities seriously. I hope and assume that my successors took them seriously.

And if, in the course of doing that job, I felt it was necessary to ask for the identity of a U.S. person, I would do so. Obviously, I would do so judiciously. That information would come only to me. It wouldn't be more broadly disseminated. It certainly wouldn't be leaked.

But I don't, on the face, find it striking that, if, in fact, as you suggest is the case, the U.N. Ambassador made more requests than other members, that that's necessarily unusual.

MR. GOWDY: All right. When I use the words "collude, conspire,

coordinate," do those three words have different meanings to you, or are they all essentially interchangeable? Because I'm going to try to use them all together, but I want to make sure that you understand them in the context in which I use them.

MS. RICE: Collude, conspire --

MR. GOWDY: Collude, conspire, coordinate.

MS. RICE: I think they're different.

MR. GOWDY: Tell me how.

MS. RICE: Well, I think "conspire" implies a conspiracy, which, as I understand it, is a violation of law.

MR. GOWDY: Depends on what you're conspiring to do.

MS. RICE: Well, help me out here, lawyers.

MR. GOWDY: It's an agreement between two or more persons. You could conspire to go to lunch, or you could conspire to commit a crime, but it's an agreement --

MS. RICE: You might coordinate to go to lunch. I don't know why you'd call it conspiring.

MR. GOWDY: And that's exactly why I ask. I want to know whether or not you view those words separately, because I don't want to use them all the same if you don't --

MS. RICE: I do view them separately, and I'm happy to get into my best attempt at a semantic dissection of each. But I think "coordinate," to me, does not imply anything necessarily nefarious. "Collude" begins to or may -- in fact, definitely does, and "conspire" certainly does.

Now, that's just how I hear the words and understand them. I'm not

purporting to give you dictionary definitions here. But they do strike me as different.

I don't know if any of my counsel would want to say something differently.

MR. GOWDY: Well, this is the way I'm going to do it then. I'm going to ask the questions, and I'm going to insert each one of those words separately as opposed to together. And if you get tired of me doing that, if I'm asking too many questions, you can just say, all right, I get where you're going, and for these purposes I'll view them all the same.

MS. RICE: Okay.

MR. GOWDY: And I'm going to ask you about Donald Trump. I'm going to ask you about Donald Trump's official campaign, those that were paid or officially hired. And then I'm going to ask you about what I kind of consider to be hangers-on or people who represent that they may have a relationship even though they may not.

Before you separated from service in -- did you leave in January 2017?

MS. RICE: 20th.

MR. GOWDY: Okay. Before you separated from service, did you have any evidence or had you come across any evidence, or intelligence, for those who don't like the word "evidence," that Donald Trump conspired with the Russian Government to interfere with or influence the 2016 election?

MS. RICE: Donald Trump himself?

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. RICE: Sorry, what was the verb you used?

MR. GOWDY: I think I said "conspire," but I better write them down.

MS. RUEMMLER: And I think you should limit your answers to

[REDACTED]

intelligence, because that's what you would have been privy to.

MR. GOWDY: Well, but your lawyer raises a really good point. When I use the word "evidence," how does that differ from the word "intelligence," in your mind?

MS. RICE: Intelligence would be material provided by the Intelligence Community, in most instances classified, but something that I would receive as part of my intelligence take, as opposed to something I'd read in the newspaper or as opposed to something that I might hear on the street.

MR. GOWDY: Well, your lawyer raises a good point, but it's going to require me to ask you about both. Because if I don't ask you about the other, then some of my friends on the other side may accuse me of not asking all the right questions.

So we'll use the word "conspire." And right now we're just talking about Donald Trump. And we'll start with intelligence, and then we'll move to evidence.

MS. RICE: So, to repeat the question, do I recall seeing any intelligence prior to my separation from government that indicated or suggested that Donald Trump per se conspired with Russia?

MR. GOWDY: To interfere with or influence the 2016 election.

MS. RICE: I don't recall intelligence that I would consider evidence to that effect that I saw prior -- of conspiracy prior to my departure.

MR. GOWDY: Now, it could just be the way I'm hearing it and not the way that you're saying it, but you emphasized one of the words in that sentence. You emphasized the word "intelligence."

MS. RICE: Isn't that what you asked?

MR. GOWDY: It is.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Okay.

MR. GOWDY: But it's going to lead me to ask, was there something that you don't consider intelligence, other forms of evidence? And I realize people don't like the word "evidence." I just don't know what other word to use.

MS. RICE: Not that I specifically recall.

MR. GOWDY: All right.

Insert the word "coordinate." Evidence that Donald Trump himself coordinated with the Russian Government. Intelligence first, and then evidence second.

MS. RICE: As opposed to people close to him?

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. RICE: I don't recall intelligence or evidence to that effect.

MR. GOWDY: All right. Well, I'll skip the next question then.

We've done "conspire." We've done "coordinate." How about we do "collude"?

MS. RICE: Same thing.

MR. GOWDY: Same answer?

MS. RICE: Yes.

MR. GOWDY: Okay. All right. So that's Mr. Trump himself.

We'll go with the, for want of a better phrase, official campaign. I don't even know who was official and not official, but people that he either hired or specifically asked to join his campaign, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Potentially.

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

Responsibility	Percentage
Current government	85%
Previous government	10%
Neither	5%

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

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MR. GOWDY: And don't ask me to remember something I heard 30 seconds ago.

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Are we talking about -- well, I recall concerns conveyed and

[illegible]

[REDACTED]

So that would be an example of a variety of points of concern that came to my attention related to General Flynn. I don't believe he was the only one. I recall hearing concerns expressed about Carter Page and potentially others.

MR. GOWDY: You say [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I think it's been stated in the press that -- and, in fact, acknowledged that

[REDACTED] was among those. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I, just for comparison, served on President Obama's transition team. I also was an outside, informal, but close adviser during the campaign of 2008. And I don't recall I or others that were inside the campaign having contacts with the Russians.

MR. GOWDY: All right. Your answer introduced another word that also starts with C, "contact." I assume you would agree contact can either -- sometimes it's benign, sometimes it's not benign, sometimes it's witting, and sometimes it's unwitting.

[REDACTED]

When you saw the frequency of contact, do you recall what anyone in our law enforcement or intelligence communities did to determine whether it was simply contact or whether it was beginning to veer over into the other three -- collude, conspire, coordinate?

MS. RICE: I think that's, frankly, a question better directed to law enforcement or the IC.

You know, if we get into the chronology of the Russia story, we can go into this in more depth, but our principal interest and concern, as we first learned of what Russia might be doing, was to understand and get a comprehensive Intelligence Community high-confidence assessment as to what was going on with what purpose and objective. And that was what we sought from the IC.

What they did in order to acquire that assessment I can't state with certainty, so I would suggest they'd be better positioned to answer that.

MR. GOWDY: Well, let's go ahead and go with the chronology. When did you first learn of Russia's efforts to interfere with or influence the 2016 election cycle?

MS. RICE: My recollection is that my first indication of that was through press reporting in June of 2016 when the first reports came out of the DNC hacks.

MR. GOWDY: Having never served at the levels you've served in government, is it unusual that you would learn it from press reporting as opposed to colleagues within the administration, or is that not unusual?

MS. RICE: It's not ideal. I can't say it's entirely unusual.

MR. GOWDY: All right. And once you learned via press reporting, what was your response?

MS. RICE: I was deeply concerned, as were my colleagues in the

[REDACTED]

administration. And we asked the Intelligence Community to provide us their best understanding of what this was about. Were these, for example, something sui generis, or were they the kind of thing we had seen in the past that was also concerning [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: You testified that was in the summer of --

MS. RICE: Mid-June-ish of 2016.

MR. GOWDY: Do you recall if that was before or after the hack of the DNC's server?

MS. RICE: It was after. I mean, what I'm recalling, if I wasn't precise, was press reporting on the DNC hack.

MR. GOWDY: Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED] Given that, do you recall any precautions being taken leading up to the 2016 election cycle? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

But to answer your broader question, yes, for several years in the run-up to 2016, as we'd seen evidence of Russian and Chinese hacking into various types of systems, we took a variety of steps that I think you're familiar with both to warn governmental and nongovernmental entities, to give them the tools through DHS and FBI to pursue these types of intrusions and their perpetrators. And we gave the executive branch, through an executive order, the ability to punish cyber intruders through the cyber EO.

So we took a variety of steps, going back several years, as we saw more and more of this kind of effort, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: All right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Because you referenced the transition, that you served on President Obama's transition team.

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Well, if I drew a line, I wasn't trying to, so just to be clear.

MR. GOWDY: I drew the line, the election -- pre-election, post-election.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: Both.

MS. RICE: Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[10:50 a.m.]

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am. Would you have been one of the advisers that President Obama consulted with on how to respond to Russia's active measures, whether or not to say something before the election or wait until after the election?

MS. RICE: There was much more to it than that. But yes, I was involved in the policy decision process on how to respond to the Russian intrusions.

MR. GOWDY: I do not doubt that there is much more to it than what I've said, and you are welcome to -- I'm sure that it was a long analysis. So, to the extent you can shed light on that, because one of the three things we do have to look at is U.S. response, if there is anything you would like to say or you think we would benefit from under that, we'd love to hear it.

MS. RICE: Okay. So if you'll allow me to elaborate in some detail. I mentioned that my first indication, as I recall, of information suggesting unusual Russian activity was around mid-June in the context of press reporting. To my knowledge, none of my other senior colleagues at the White House had had any prior indication before the press reporting either. And when we received it, obviously, the President was concerned, I was concerned, my senior colleagues on the National Security Council staff were concerned.

Lisa Monaco (ph), who was the President's -- was assistant to the President but a Deputy National Security Advisor and the senior person in the White House responsible for cybersecurity issues as well as Homeland Security and counterterrorism, was asked by me and the President to work with the Intelligence Community, to task them and to support them in their efforts to investigate what was being suggested in the press reports, to shed any and all light as quickly as

they could on what we understood this Russian intrusion to be about and, in fact, to confirm that it was a Russian intrusion.

And so, over the course of some weeks in the summer, we were awaiting with urgency whatever the Intelligence Community could provide us that would illuminate our understanding of that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The next day, as I recall, the President convened a small group of his senior national security officials, the intelligence leaders, the FBI, the AG, me, the chief of staff of the White House, my two principal deputies, Lisa Monaco (ph) and Avril Haines (ph), to discuss what we knew and to hear from the various components of the IC and the law enforcement community what they knew, so bringing this all together. And I think we had another meeting within the next day or two, and all of this being in roughly the first week of August, where Secretary Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security, was also involved.

[REDACTED]

And over the course of the subsequent days and weeks, we were focused on several things, if I might describe them to you. First and very importantly, we were still seeking a high-confidence, comprehensive Intelligence Community assessment as to what this was all about. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And we were still very, very concerned to receive a thorough and comprehensive Intelligence Community assessment of what this was. That is point one.

Secondly, we were very concerned that the States, the 50 States that were responsible for protecting and preserving the integrity of our voting systems were made aware of this information and were urged in the strongest terms to take every possible effort that they could, with the support of the Department of Homeland Security, to shore up the security of our electoral systems because Secretary Johnson had shared that there had, even at that stage, been -- I think he used the colloquial term "knocking" on the infrastructure of a handful of States at that point.

Thirdly, we were interested in being in a position as quickly as we had this IC assessment to be able to make the public aware of what we were becoming aware of.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We were also, frankly, quite concerned that they could take -- they could release additional -- steal additional information and release it or, even more worrying, steal information, manipulate it, falsify it, and release it. So we envisioned a variety of ways that the Russians could be doing more and do worse than what we believed they had already done. We wanted to deter the Russians from attempting to do more.

And in that vein, as I think you may know by now, Director Brennan in that very first week, in a previously scheduled phone call with his Russian counterpart, made it clear that we knew what was going on and that we were deeply concerned. And President Obama confronted President Putin in China on the margins of the G-20 at the end of a bilateral that they had one-on-one, to make very plain we knew and that they better stop or that the consequences for Russia would be quite severe. So we were trying, as I said, to deter further Russian actions.

And then we also very much wanted to brief and enlist the support of the bipartisan leadership of Congress, the Gang of Eight in the first instance, and ultimately subsequently the Big Four, to hear -- to know what we knew. And that's why Director Brennan made aggressive efforts over the course of August and early September to brief each of the members of the Gang of Eight [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and to enlist the leadership of Congress to help in conveying the message to the States, who were skeptical, some of them, and the public that we had a problem and that it was a problem on a national basis, on a bipartisan basis.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We were very concerned, frankly, that, given the atmosphere, given that Candidate Trump was claiming our elections were going to be rigged, given all this swirl, that what we might say or do could be misconstrued as being a political effort or political statement rather than a statement of fact in national security. And we tried very hard to guard against that.

We wanted the leadership of Congress, therefore, as the President asked them in early September, to join in issuing a strong statement of warning and concern. So that was another line of effort that didn't bear fruit as quickly as -- or, in fact, ultimately as we had hoped.

Finally, during the course of this period, we were also involved in crafting a robust package of potential punishments that we might employ if the Russians were not deterred and took further actions in advance of the election beyond what we thought they had already done or, if we didn't see evidence of that, to use as necessary after the election. So we were working on various forms of pressure, sanctions, punishments at the same time as we were doing all of these things.

Now, if you want to fast-forward to late September. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That was something that we deemed a very important predicate to a public statement.

We had also sought, as I said, the bipartisan statement from the Big Four, which took a very long time, we had thought at times might not materialize. And when it did materialize, it was quite thin gruel, in my judgment. And meanwhile, we were trying to persuade the States that they had a problem and that they needed to seek support.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This culminated on October 7th in the issuance of the public statement by Director Clapper and Secretary Johnson about the Russian interference. And in the period between October 7th and the election itself, we were watching very carefully for any indications the Russians had done more and crossed further the line that had been drawn.

I should say also that, on October 7th, when we issued that public statement, I again -- not again. I called in Ambassador Kislyak to my office and, at the President's request, conveyed to him to be -- asked him to convey to Moscow another direct message from President Obama to President Putin reiterating and amplifying the warning that he had issued in China.

MR. GOWDY: Thank you.

I think we're out of time. So, Mr. Schiff.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you.

Welcome, Ambassador, and I appreciate your willingness to respond to all of our questions today. And, also, I appreciate my colleague's -- I think you've stayed well within the spirit of what Mr. Conaway and I had discussed. I was concerned at the outset that this may be solely focused on unmasking, which would have been at odds with our understanding.

I want to ask you questions before I turn it over to some of my colleagues, but just to follow up on some of the questions that have already been asked, you were asked a number of questions about whether you saw evidence or intelligence regarding the President's involvement in a conspiracy or collusion or coordination with the Russians. I just want to set the context with you, if I could.

Director Comey testified that, in July of last year, he began a counterintelligence investigation into people associated with the Trump campaign

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

and what context they may have had with Russia. That investigative responsibility wasn't part of your portfolio, I take it.

MS. RICE: No, not at all.

MR. SCHIFF: And would Director Comey brief you on the progress of his investigation?

MS. RICE: No. So just -- I think it's important for everybody to understand: We were not informed by Director Comey or the Attorney General that there was an active investigation of anybody in the Trump orbit. We would not have asked that question because, in the Obama White House, we maintained scrupulously the firewall between people in the White House and contacts with Justice about potential or actual criminal matters. The only communication that was sanctioned in that vein was between the White House Counsel and the Justice Department or the FBI.

So we would not have asked that question. To my knowledge, we didn't ask the question. And Director Comey did not volunteer to us, not only then but through the duration of the administration, that there was an active investigation of anybody in the Trump orbit. I knew he was looking at this issue, that he was concerned about it. But he never specifically shared with me or others, to my knowledge, that such an investigation was ongoing. And I learned about it formally in the public domain after I left office.

MR. SCHIFF: In terms of any information or evidence or intelligence that you might have come across implicating in any way either the President or anybody affiliated with his campaign, that would not have been a part of any formal role in the investigation but, rather, something that came across your desk by virtue of your other responsibilities?

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: My responsibilities for national security, as National Security Advisor, yes.

MR. SCHIFF: In terms of a specific question about the President, were you aware at the time of the meeting that has since become public between Don Jr., Paul Manafort, Jared Kushner, and several Russians that have various degrees of affiliation with the Russian Government?

MS. RICE: I was not.

MR. SCHIFF: During that email exchange, information was offered to the Trump campaign that was derogatory to Secretary Clinton. They were asked if they would be open to receiving that information, and the response was that they would love to get that information.

If the President's open call, which occurred around the same time, for the Russians to hack Hillary Clinton's emails, that they'd be richly rewarded, was made with the knowledge of that approach by the Russians, could that be evidence of the President's own involvement in some effort to coordinate or seek Russian support?

MS. RICE: In my opinion, yes, it could.

MR. SCHIFF: So whether or not things we have seen the President do publicly were part of any coordinated effort depends on what other information or evidence may be unearthed in our investigation or Mr. Mueller's?

MS. RICE: Absolutely. I want to be very clear that I was responding to the question as posed, which was within the confines of my tenure as a sitting U.S. official. That's all I could testify to with any certainty.

MR. SCHIFF: You mentioned that at one point the leader of the Trump transition team expressed concerns.

MS. RICE: The NSC transition, yes.

MR. SCHIFF: Oh, I'm sorry, the NSC transition.

MS. RICE: The Trump NSC transition.

MR. SCHIFF: The Trump NSC transition team expressed concerns regarding Ambassador Kislyak, contacts between General Flynn and Ambassador Kislyak. Who were you referring to as the head of the NSC transition for the Trump team?

MS. RICE: Mr. Marshall Billingsly.

MR. SCHIFF: And when did this conversation take place?

MS. RICE: I don't recall precisely, but sometime early in the process of the transition. So late November-early Decemberish.

MR. SCHIFF: And do you remember where the conversation took place?

MS. RICE: It would have been at the NSC in some place, whether the situation room or other classified facility where our teams were meeting.

MR. SCHIFF: And who else was present during the conversation?

MS. RICE: I'm not certain who all was present because I wasn't there, but I can tell you that I learned of this information through my colleagues, including my chief of staff, who was the direct liaison with Mr. Billingsly.

MR. SCHIFF: And who was your chief of staff at the time?

MS. RICE: Susie George (ph).

MR. SCHIFF: And what was conveyed to you about the concerns expressed by Mr. Billingsly?

MS. RICE: As I said, the concern was -- let me put it this way: What was relayed to me -- let me back up.

Understand we're in the early days of a new transition. We are all meeting

each other for the first time. We are all having communication and contact for the first time. Over the course of the entire transition, I had four separate meetings myself with General Flynn where we exchanged information and I briefed him for over about 12 hours.

At the same time, there were extensive contacts at the staff level. I think the NSC was one of the few parts of the bureaucracy that actually executed a real transition in 2016. And we had Trump-led landing teams, and I say plural because they changed in composition over time. And, indeed, Mr. Billingsly began as the leader of the NSC transition team from the Trump side. He didn't conclude in that role. And they not only met with my chief of staff and my senior team that I had designated to be on point for transition, but eventually they met with other members of the NSC staff, office by office, to hear from the various regional and functional offices at the NSC what was in their portfolios and et cetera so they could make personnel and policy preparations.

So it was in the context of one of the relatively early meetings between my chief of staff and the head of the Trump NSC landing team that my chief of staff conveyed to me, in the context of other things that had happened in these conversations, that Mr. Billingsly expressed concern to them about the frequency of General Flynn's contacts with Ambassador Kislyak and potentially the substance of the contacts and, as I said, asked for background on Ambassador Kislyak that he seemed to want to use to persuade General Flynn that perhaps he should scale back the contacts.

That's the best of my recollection of that. And it came, frankly, in the context of other data points that caused me to be somewhat concerned about General Flynn's potential contacts with Russia.

MR. SCHIFF: Do you have any more detail you can offer, in terms of did Mr. Billingsly describe how frequent the contacts were between General Flynn and Ambassador Kislyak? And you mentioned also the content of the contacts. Is there anything more you can tell us about the content that concerned Mr. Billingsly?

MS. RICE: I can't speak with any precise recollection on that. The contacts in terms of frequency were not once; they were repeated. And I think Mr. Billingsly found that strange. My recollection, although I'm not certain about this, was that he was concerned both about phone and potential contacts in person. And I think perhaps -- I don't know -- that Mr. Billingsly was worried about what he didn't know in terms of what was being said between them. But I don't recall, I don't remember hearing, you know, specific substance of the conversation.

MR. SCHIFF: You mentioned that you also had several conversations with General Flynn. Did any of those conversations involve Russia or the Russian Ambassador or U.S.-Russia policy?

MS. RICE: Yes. So, just to lay the context for you, we had spent a great deal of time and effort over the course of the whole year of 2016 preparing for the transition. My team produced over 100 briefing papers for the incoming administration. I personally read and reviewed every one of them. And they covered the waterfront of key issues that any incoming team would want to know about, from budget of the NSC to personnel to structure to every policy issue of significance. We also prepared memos that -- on contingencies, things that we envisioned could happen in the real world that would be difficult, tough issues that could come at the administration in their early months and ways of working through those issues. We worked very hard and I'm quite proud of the amount of

[REDACTED]

time and effort that my team put into trying to execute a responsible transition at the direction of President Obama.

And so, when General Flynn was named to his role, we were actually in the midst of the President's last foreign trip to Greece, Germany, and Peru. As soon as we returned from that trip, I reached out to try to introduce myself to General Flynn and to congratulate him and to offer any and all support that we could provide. I offered to make myself available for as many hours between that point and January 20th as he found helpful or necessary. And I, frankly, found myself chasing him to try to find time that worked on both of our schedules to provide that handoff.

In the course of the four meetings that I described, we touched on all the major -- major -- policy issues that you might imagine. Obviously, Russia was one of them. We touched, however, more superficially on Russia than might have otherwise been the case. This was my judgment. We -- he had all the briefing materials provided to him on Russia, and those remain unchanged. We didn't talk about Ambassador Kislyak, to answer specifically your question, but we did talk about Russia as an adversary, as a threat to NATO. We talked about Ukraine. We talked about Syria. We talked about Iran and Russia in all of those contexts.

But, frankly, we spent a lot more time talking about China in part because General Flynn's focus was on China as our principal overarching adversary. He had many questions and concerns about China. And when I elicited -- sought to elicit his perspective on Russia, he was quite -- I started to say dismissive, but that may be an overstatement. He downplayed his assessment of Russia as a threat to the United States. He called it overblown. He said they're a declining power, they're demographically challenged, they're not really much of a threat, and then

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

reemphasized the importance of China.

I had seen enough at that point and heard enough to be a little bit sensitive to the question of the nature of General Flynn's engagements with the Russians. And so, while I certainly gave him what he -- what I thought any incoming National Security Advisor would need, in terms of broad strokes of Russia policy, Ukraine, Syria, all of those things, I didn't go into depth on particularly [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in the sort of hard national security realm. I figured that he could become briefed on that when he took office.

MR. SCHIFF: And during those discussions, did he ever bring up his meetings with or conversations with Ambassador Kislyak?

MS. RICE: He did not.

MR. SCHIFF: And you didn't raise the subject with him, in light of what Mr. Billingsly had told you?

MS. RICE: No, I don't recall that I did.

MR. SCHIFF: There have been public reports about Mr. Kushner also meeting with Ambassador Kislyak and General Flynn and having discussions of setting up a secret back channel at a Russian diplomatic facility. Is that something you were aware of at the time?

MS. RICE: It was not something I was aware of at the time.

MR. SCHIFF: Some have attempted to defend that as being a normal, usual, or laudable practice to establish that kind of channel. What is your take on the idea of setting up a secret channel through a Russian diplomatic facility?

MS. RICE: Quite frankly, when I read that report and to the extent that I thought it might be true, I was horrified. It's inconceivable to me that someone

[REDACTED]

associated with an incoming administration would seek to have a private channel with an adversarial government designed to be hidden from the government that he or she was going to represent in a few weeks' time.

And the fact that one would consider, if this is, in fact, the case -- and I have no independent knowledge of this -- using Russian communications to speak to Moscow is hair-raising.

MR. SCHIFF: And what about the Russian communications makes you say that?

MS. RICE: That approach, if it's true, would suggest to me that one places more confidence in our principal adversary's interests and communications than they do in our own. And it is deeply troubling to me that anybody responsible in any way, shape, or form for U.S. policy would privilege the Russians over the United States Government.

MR. SCHIFF: Let me ask you about some of the chronology that you went over with Mr. Gowdy. When you initially learned about the hacking, did this appear like another intelligence-gathering operation that is no different than other instances in the past of a foreign government wanting to know information about a potential candidate, someone who might become the President of the United States?

MS. RICE: Obviously, we didn't know. We were concerned to find out, as best we could, but we'd had sufficient predicates and precedents of that sort of intelligence-gathering for information-gathering espionage purposes that we might have at first blush had a hypothesis that that's what this was.

MR. SCHIFF: Was it only in August that you learned that more than a foreign intelligence-gathering operation, this was going to be an effort to use that

[REDACTED]

data, to effectively weaponize it, to influence the outcome?

MS. RICE: I can't be precise in saying that -- that's when I recall it most clearly; let me put it that way. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I can't say that we hadn't -- as I said, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: One of the questions that we've been trying to answer -- I'd be interested in your perspective on it -- is whether the Russian intention from the beginning was to engage in an effort to influence the outcome or whether this began as one thing, as a foreign intelligence-gathering operation, and later there was some decision point made to utilize the data they had stolen. In other words, was it the Russian intention all along to gather the information for the purpose of using it, or was there something that triggered a Russian decision to affirmatively try to affect the outcome?

MS. RICE: I don't have the ability, based on what I saw while I was in government alone to make that judgment with confidence. I can tell you what I now believe as a private citizen, aggregating what I knew while I was in government with what I have learned subsequently from public reporting, which I acknowledge may not be entirely accurate.

But my impression, looking at the full span of this, is that the Russians were -- have been for years gathering information for information purposes from U.S. entities of various sorts, governmental and nongovernmental; that at some

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

stage, presumably in the spring of 2016 or early summer, they took a decision to become more actively involved in our election process, through hacking, leaking, and potentially -- although I don't know that we ever saw information suggesting that they actually did this -- falsifying information or manipulating our voting system.

But, you know, somewhere along the line, I believe they took a decision to do something more than simply gather information for intelligence purposes but to involve themselves in our election affirmatively. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: It was clear, I guess, in August that the Russian goal was going to be more extensive and involved than just gathering intelligence.

MS. RICE: It was becoming clear. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and I think we had -- we did not have a comprehensive assessment to that effect. And there were, frankly, some agencies that were less invested in that reporting than others.

MR. SCHIFF: At what point were you confident of the Russian attribution? When would you peg that, in terms of the calendar? When did you feel that you had enough confidence about the attribution to discuss it publicly?

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: And was there a discussion going on within the NSC about public attribution, when it should be made, who it should be made by, and whether there ought to be an effort made to impose sanctions at the time of attribution?

MS. RICE: So let me take those in parts because they're not all one and

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the same. As I mentioned in response to Mr. Gowdy's question, we were very eager and eagerly awaiting a [REDACTED] assessment. We thought it was very important because we had different pieces of the IC. We had obviously DNI, CIA, NSA, FBI and others that had pieces of this puzzle. We wanted those pieces put together, aggregated, and distilled [REDACTED] [REDACTED] That was a very important predicate for making a public statement.

And why did we place such high stock in that [REDACTED] assessment? Because that was the analytically sound approach, but also because, as I said, we were very, very concerned that we handle this issue in a manner that was not only actually but perceived to be nonpartisan.

We did not want to play into any campaign's line that the elections were rigged. We did not want to seem to favor one candidate over another, in particular Secretary Clinton over Mr. Trump, and we didn't want to feed and play into the Russian effort to undermine public confidence in our election process. And so the [REDACTED] assessment we viewed as an important predicate that would enable any statement of public attribution to be more likely to be consumed on its merits as a national security matter than as a political matter.

MR. SCHIFF: Now, when you say the [REDACTED], there were different levels of confidence ultimately in the judgment about the Russian motivations and how much was about taking down Secretary Clinton, how much was helping Donald Trump, how much was sowing discord. But in terms of the fundamental issue of who was responsible for the hacking and the dumping of documents, that was clear fairly early, was it not?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: I think we felt very strongly that, to the extent that it was clear, it was clear when the Intelligence Community agreed and had [REDACTED] that it was clear. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] We were not trying to get into telling the IC what they should say or when they should say it, except that we wanted them to do it as quickly as possible and -- but do it as quickly as possible with integrity and quality.

And, you know, much as we felt, as I know you did, a sense of urgency about making this public, we really felt very strongly that we needed ideally two things to proceed to public attribution: As I said, the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] assessment; and, secondly, as you know, we wanted very much to have this bipartisan Big Four statement released to underscore that this was a national security concern, not a partisan concern.

MR. SCHIFF: The need to deter the Russians from doing more before the election and the concern about the potential Russian escalation, how did that factor into the decision about when attribution was made and when there would be an effort to pursue sanctions?

And let me ask in this respect as well: The dumping of the documents continued on an almost daily basis. What conclusion did you reach about whether the warnings that you conveyed, that the President conveyed, were having an effect or not having an effect because the dumping of documents was continuing?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: So, let me take them in reverse order, and if I forget a piece, remind me, please.

With respect to the continued document dumping, our assessment,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

With respect to how deterrence and attribution --

MR. SCHIFF: I'll ask you, Ambassador, on that last point, though, for cutouts like Guccifer2, which were considered to be arms of the GRU, how could you conclude that any continuing release by the GRU was not directed, at least in terms of its timing, by the Kremlin?

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I can't give you precision on Guccifer versus DCLeaks versus Wiki. Wiki, as I recall, was the principal vehicle in the September-October timeframe, but I may be mistaken on that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

To come back to your question about the interplay between deterrence and attribution, we delivered the deterrence message as quickly as we thought we could do so without compromising sources and methods. So we did it in the first instance between Director Brennan and his counterpart on their secure phone call. We did it again in early September, when the President face-to-face met with Putin. And we thought that the President conveying a very pointed and forceful message to Putin one-on-one was a critical gating step. And we had the opportunity, so we took it. So there was not an interplay there.

Again, attribution was on a timeline that was affected really only by two things, as I said: One, the [REDACTED] assessment, which, frankly, took longer than we had hoped or anticipated; and, secondly, we were hoping, although I think, if we had never gotten it, we would have moved on, that the Gang of -- that the Big Four would release a bipartisan statement and that that statement would have been a bit more clear than it turned out to be.

With respect to punishment, as I said, beginning in August, we prepared a very broad range of potential punishments in the economic realm, in the diplomatic realm, in the cyber realm, and others. And we had a range of punishments. I've used the analogy of we had it sort of heated to 300 in the oven, more cooked than not, but not all the way cooked. We had them ready, and we could have cooked them to fully baked in short order at any point between September and the election in November had the President taken a decision that our deterrence had failed and it was time to punish.

We didn't want to punish preemptively for several reasons. One, we thought, if we punished in the absence of evidence that they had done more than they had already done before the warning, that we would have, in fact, precipitated

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

worse behavior on their part than we, in fact, saw. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and we weren't trying to precipitate that.

Secondly, we really did not want to play into the hands of those who wanted to undermine, in the public's mind, confidence in the election itself, the election mechanisms. And we didn't want to do the Russians' dirty work for them by, you know, frankly, freaking out the American public. Warning them, yes, but freaking them out, we did not seek to do if it wasn't necessary.

And so we also knew that we had ample time to punish after the election if punishment were the objective rather than deterrence. And as we issued the successive warnings to the Russians, did not see evidence of escalation, a decision was taken not to punish in advance of the election, knowing full well that we had the ability to do so after the election.

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Himes.

MR. HIMES: Thank you, Ambassador.

MS. RICE: Can I ask a -- excuse me, sir -- a selfish question? How much time do we have before we get a bio break?

MR. ROONEY: Whenever you want.

MS. RICE: Is this a good time? Do you mind? Okay thank you.

[Recess.]

MR. HIMES: Thank you, Ambassador.

Jim Himes of Connecticut. I want to ask a couple of questions that will paint a more detailed picture of the consideration of responses to the Russian interference.

[REDACTED]

Before I do that, let me go back and maybe "clean up" is the right word something that caught my attention in an answer that you gave to Mr. Rooney's question, a question by Mr. Rooney.

He asked you a question whether you had any recollection of sharing classified information with persons not entitled to receive that information. Your response was that you have no recollection of sharing classified information with the media. The media is obviously a subset of those not entitled to receive, so I just --

MS. RICE: Thank you.

MR. HIMES: In order to close a window for inference if it should be closed.

MS. RICE: I have no recollection of sharing classified information with anybody not entitled to receive it, including the media but not limited to the media.

MR. HIMES: Great. Thank you.

MS. RICE: Thank you.

MR. HIMES: So, to the debate around the options for deterring or punishing Russia, there was a Times report at the time that said that the Obama administration -- and I'm quoting here --

First, precisely who

was involved in the discussions of the options that were available?

MS. RICE: So let me take a minute or two to try to explain the process we went through. First of all, in the period beginning in August, early August, through the election, we held these deliberations in very tight circles, quite deliberately. The circle expanded somewhat from early August over the course of the next 2

months, but it was tightly held.

At the principals level -- and that's the level at which I was responsible in chairing the meetings -- we had in the first instance a subset of the relevant Cabinet Secretaries and then ultimately the full circle of the relevant Cabinet Secretaries, to include the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, U.N. Ambassador, Chair of the Joint Chiefs, all the Intelligence leadership, and the law -- AG and FBI and DHS.

But this was what we called principals-only discussions. So, prior to the election, principals did not bring plus-ones to the meetings, which they might in other circumstances have -- at least in some circumstances been allowed to do. We had a very small subset of NSC staff involved in these discussions, three or four or five at any one time.

At the same time, the deputies committee, chaired by Avril Haines (ph) and some meetings also chaired by Lisa Monaco (ph) dealt with the pre-work that fed into the principals process on vetting various punishment options. Lisa's role was primarily -- she sat in the larger principals and deputies meetings, but she oversaw the work in the cybersphere in particular. Avril's (ph) deputies committee was bringing together the economic pieces, the diplomatic, and the cyber, and also potential covert action realm. And, again, very tight circles, not plus-ones.

There was some work done at the working level in the cybersphere to sort of generate at a technical level these kinds of options. When I say "working level," I mean Assistant Secretary level roughly, which is actually a little higher than working level.

And in the economic sphere, we needed less input from the working level because we'd, frankly, done a whole lot of homework on economic -- ways to

[REDACTED]

punish Russia economically in the context of Ukraine. And so we had a whole lot of options that had been generated for that purpose that could be utilized for this purpose. And so we didn't need to do a whole lot of -- we did some, but not a whole lot of extra spadework.

And then, in the diplomatic realm -- and by which I mean, you know, their facilities, their personnel, that sort of stuff -- we had also -- there had been some work done over prior months because we had considered taking some steps based on our frustration with the Russians about how they were treating our personnel in Moscow. And I had had a separate discussion some months back with Ambassador Kislyak warning him about the way they were treating our personnel and saying that, you know, they should be prepared for reciprocity if they continued. So we'd done some homework in that realm as well. We amplified it and built on it in the course of the process that I chaired.

So we had some meetings over the course of August and September on this, maybe into October. And then, as we watched to see if the Russians actually were not deterred from doing further, as I said, we were ready very quickly to bring those various options to fruition; and in any event, after the election and as we came back from the President's final foreign trip and began the process of transition, returned back to those options and refined them and ultimately made decisions.

MR. HIMES: You've talked a little bit about the economic option. Two other options, and I'll ask you in the end whether there were other options considered. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. HIMES: Which gets to my, I think, last question. In late December, there was what I would characterize as a modest package approved, the expulsion of 35 diplomats, the closure of the Russian compounds.

Can you just spend a minute or two on why that was the particular option settled upon? And part two of the question is, did you personally agree that that was the right approach at the time?

MS. RICE: Well, the package, as I recall it, had multiple components to it. One was, as you said, the expulsion of 35 diplomats, the closure of their two facilities, one in the Eastern Shore, one in New York. We also did the public attribution of the forensics of how they conducted the attack. There were sanctions, including for the first time not just sanctions against individuals, but sanctions against the Russian intelligence entities that we believed had conducted the intrusions and attacks. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So it was a package of things. We did consider more robust economic measures, and I'd like to come back and elaborate on the considerations that went into those. But we, frankly, considered the package at the time, based on what we knew and based on what we understood them to have done, to have been rather significant. As I recall, it wasn't consumed at the time as modest, although, with the benefit of hindsight and what we know as we've gathered further information about what transpired, I understand why you may consider it that now.

The one area where we -- let me share with you the considerations in both

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the economic and the diplomatic realm. In the economic realm, as I suggested, we had gathered a whole range of potential sanctions that we could have employed in the first instance in response to what happened in Crimea and Ukraine. We imposed a fair number of significant sanctions as a result of their actions on Ukraine. We did so in unison with and in coordination with our European partners. And the aim was to find sanctions that we could -- that could be mirrored on the European side, thus, to have greater impact on Russia. And we were looking for sanctions that would hurt the Russians far more than they might hurt the Europeans or ourselves.

And so we basically plucked all the low-hanging fruit in that universe, things that would hurt the Russians disproportionately, not hurt the Europeans or ourselves, that we could agree on with the Europeans, agree with the Europeans on, and successively over months from 2014 had imposed those sanctions.

So we were left with a number of sanctions that, to use a term we sometimes use in the White House, had hair on them. They were not low-hanging fruit. They were problematic in one respect or another. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

So there were some that they didn't like.

There were economic options that were quite a bit more potent than anything we had thus employed -- thus far employed. We didn't choose to use those, either for Ukraine, because we couldn't get the Europeans to go along, or for the Russian hacking, because the Treasury Department assessed that their

[REDACTED]

systemic impact on Europe and the United States would be very significant. So, in other words, we plucked the low-hanging fruit of things that hurt them far more than they hurt us or our allies. We were now into the realm of things that could hurt us equally or even us more than the Russians. And Treasury's very strong recommendation, again, as we went through this process in December, looking at what more we could do in the economic sphere, was not at that stage to take actions that they viewed as having very real systemic risk to the Europeans and to us, as well as detrimental impact on the Russians. So we didn't. And I think, you know, I have mixed feelings about that personally in retrospect, to be honest.

In the diplomatic realm, we looked at expelling -- and I may get the numbers wrong -- but something like 10, 20, or 35 diplomats. Our Embassy in Moscow and the State Department, even though they were the principal victims of all of the Russian harassment that we had been experiencing over the prior months and they had been advocating for this kind of stuff to respond, were very reticent to PNG as many as we did. They were afraid that whatever we did, they would reciprocate and then some. And we had less fat to cut on our side of the ledger than we thought the Russians had on their side.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I supported the robust package, including the 35 diplomats, closing both the facilities, [REDACTED] the economic sanctions. And I reluctantly agreed with the Treasury Department assessment that we shouldn't at that stage go for sanctions that had systemic risk, and as I said, I, with the benefit of hindsight, have

some misgivings about that particular part of my recommendation.

[11:58 a.m.]

MR. HIMES: Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to yield to the ranking member now. Thanks.

MR. SCHIFF: I just have one further question, and then I have a couple colleagues who also have questions they wanted to ask.

MS. RICE:

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you.

Mr. Carson.

MR. CARSON: Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Madam Ambassador.

As Ambassador to the U.N., did you engage in many dealings with your Russian counterpart?

MS. RICE: Daily.

MR. CARSON: Were there any specific challenges during those times?

MS. RICE: Daily.

[REDACTED]

You know, I'm glad you raised this. When you are the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., you are the senior American with the most frequent and intensive contact with the Russians of anybody in our government, much more so than our Ambassador to Moscow, who doesn't have access to people at the decisionmaking level every day, much more so than the Secretary of State, who may talk to his or her counterpart on the phone or meet them on the margins of meetings. It's daily. And it's daily because we're working on issues of significance in the Security Council, everything from, you know, Burundi and South Sudan to Syria and North Korea.

I spent more hours with my Russian counterpart when I was U.N. Ambassador, by far, than with my husband. And I came to know -- I'm just telling you the truth. I came to know him very well. Same with the Chinese, exact same. And same with the British and the French. The P5 ambassadors -- and we joked about this -- might as well be married to each other, given how much time they spend together.

And so I knew that everything I said to the Russian Ambassador, formal and informal, might have been reported to Moscow. I knew to be very attuned to what he said to me. I might want to report it to Washington. Same with the Chinese. And so that was a very intensive, very consistent, very important channel.

MR. CARSON: Madam Ambassador, as the facts bore out, President Obama had, in fact, told President Putin to stop his meddling in our affairs, correct?

MS. RICE: Yes.

MR. CARSON: Yes, ma'am.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Twice.

MR. CARSON: Hindsight being 20/20, do you have any doubt that, had the administration taken a public posture, you would be sitting here today?

MS. RICE: I'm sorry? I'm not --

MR. CARSON: Hindsight being 20/20, had the administration, the Obama administration, taken action, a more aggressive action, do you think you would be sitting here today, ma'am?

MS. RICE: Well, I'm not sure -- I can't answer whether I'd be sitting here today, but would we be where we are today?

First of all, we did take action to publicly attribute this on October 7th. It was a very unusual and blunt warning from the Director of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Unfortunately, it was followed some brief hours later by the release of the "Access Hollywood" tape and some further dumps by WikiLeaks, which may have crowded the attention given to it in the media.

But we took very seriously our responsibility to inform the American public, and we did so as soon as we thought we had the necessary inputs to do so, principally the [REDACTED] assessment. So I think we did that as best we reasonably could.

As to whether we should have -- and let me say also, I think we did as best we reasonably could in terms of deterrence, in terms of delivering a forceful message and watching to see very carefully whether it had been heeded. And we, as I said, concluded that up until the election they did not do more than they had or more than they could have particularly with respect to falsifying information, manipulating the voter registration rolls or the vote tally, et cetera.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So I'm not sure we could've done better on deterrence. That leaves punishment and the question of whether punishing them prior to the election would have been beneficial. I can give you my own judgment on that, and I can try to elaborate on why the judgments were made that were made.

I do not think, even in retrospect, that we should have punished them prior to the election, for the reason that I explained in response to Mr. Schiff: that if our goal was to deter, first and foremost, further disruptive Russian conduct and we thought we were having the deterrent effect that we desired and we'd then lobbed a punishment at them, our expectation was that the Russians would have, in fact, done exactly what we were trying to prevent them from doing in retaliation. So that didn't seem to be smart.

We also knew that, even if we saw no further evidence of Russian nefarious actions before the election, it would be necessary to punish them afterwards. And we were prepared to do so.

So I guess the short answer to your question, sir, is it's not obvious to me what we could have done that would have prevented, beyond what we tried to do, us being where we are today.

We can talk about whether the punishments after the election were sufficient, and I think that's a live question for you all to consider as you weigh what you can do from Congress or encourage the administration to do. But I think -- and you all correct me if I'm wrong -- that, at the time when the punishments were implemented, they were seen as relatively robust. And that's how they were intended, with the caveat that I gave Mr. Himes in considering the pros and cons of more in the economic sphere.

MR. CARSON: And, lastly, Madam Ambassador, prior to leaving your role

[REDACTED]

with the administration, did you see any evidence that an entity other than the Russian Government, directed actors, could have been responsible for the cyber interference of 2012, in the election?

MS. RICE: No.

MR. CARSON: Okay.

MS. RICE: We only saw evidence of Russia.

MR. CARSON: Thank you, ma'am.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SCHIFF: Ms. Speier.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you, Ambassador, for your comments.

I'm going to ask this question because it's the elephant in the room, oftentimes, from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, but I would like to have you on the record.

Did you ever request that a U.S. person's name be unmasked for political reasons?

MS. RICE: No, I did not.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you.

President Trump, or, I should say, many in the administration, have suggested that contacts with foreign dignitaries and foreign corporations in the transition are customary. Was that your experience during the Obama transition?

MS. RICE: Foreign?

MS. SPEIER: Foreign leaders, foreign --

MS. RICE: Foreign governments.

MS. SPEIER: -- ambassadors.

MS. RICE: Foreign leaders, government. In my experience, it was

normal, customary to have contacts with the governments of friendly countries. And, you know, we certainly did -- British, French, Germans, NATO allies, Asian allies.

It was not normal, in my experience, to have contacts with adversarial governments during a transition, apart from, you know, potentially receiving a congratulatory phone call and, you know, indicating that, you know, the President-elect, you know, looked forward to continued communication once he was in office.

MR. ROONEY: Jackie, that's 60 minutes. We're going to go to our 15 minutes, and then you can go back to yours.

Is that correct?

Yes, sir.

MR. ROONEY: So we're going to go to 15 minutes, 15 minutes now, and we might have to break for votes in between. And then you have a 1 o'clock hard stop.

Ms. Rice, I just had a couple followup questions from all the questions that we've been asking here today. And I think that it's -- and from other witnesses that we've talked to before you from the previous administration.

I think that it's pretty evident, obviously, that we all agree that the Russian involvement in our last election cycle is something that we need to focus on and something that is obviously not going to -- it's probably going to continue, with not just the Russians but, as you said, maybe with other governments as well.

Have you talked to General McMaster about what you learned while you were in his capacity as far as, like, trying to assist him in his job at all or --

MS. RICE: On any topic?

MR. ROONEY: On any topic, yeah.

MS. RICE: Okay. So, as I mentioned, I spent --

MR. ROONEY: I know you talked with General Flynn.

MS. RICE: -- 12 hours with General Flynn and shared with him 100 papers. I obviously didn't have the opportunity to do that before I left --

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: -- government with General McMaster.

Soon after General McMaster assumed the role of National Security Advisor, we did communicate. We had a relatively lengthy secure conversation where we covered, obviously much more superficially than I could over 12 hours without the benefit of classified information, a number of issues that I thought would be of interest and relevance to him.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: And, you know, they were very, you know, useful conversations but far more superficial.

I also alerted him to the fact that he -- and he wasn't aware -- that we had prepared all these transition papers for General Flynn that he should take advantage of, as well, because they were hardly out of date.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

And was that 6 minutes left to vote?

MR. CONAWAY: Let me go check. We're just going to try to tag team --

MS. RICE: Gotcha.

MR. CONAWAY: -- vote and come back.

MS. RICE: Gotcha.

MR. ROONEY: With regard to some of the things that we've been talking

[REDACTED]

about here, the Russian -- Russia trying to influence our election, which I don't think anybody in this room disputes, I think that what we're trying to get to the bottom of -- and without going into the things that you read or heard after you left office, just in your official capacity while you were still part of the administration, and the intelligence that you received, did you come across any intelligence or evidence -- and I know that Trey was getting to some of this -- in your official capacity to show that not only was the Russian Government trying to influence our election but they were actually coordinating with the Trump campaign to assist them in beating Secretary Clinton as part of the election process?

Whether it be coordinating dumping of emails or sharing intelligence that they gathered with the Trump campaign to use against Hillary Clinton, did you see anything of that nature in your official capacity in the prior administration?

MS. RICE: Well, I'll do my best to answer that.

MR. ROONEY: Yeah.

MS. RICE: But let me just say that that question crossed my mind more than once, and it was a question that I was wondering about, in part -- and due to a confluence of things: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So that was one set of data points. We talked about what we learned from Mr. Billingsly.

But you asked for evidence as well as intelligence. And I was a sentient consumer of the news, like you and others in the room, during this period. And, you know, when odd statements emanated from some in the Trump universe, they would catch my attention. You know, when it was suggested that there was about

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

to be a dump by WikiLeaks of Podesta's emails, that was a strange statement. When Candidate Trump called on Russia to produce the emails that had been missing from Secretary Clinton and to, you know, hack her systems, that was a very strange comment.

There were a number of such things --

MR. ROONEY: Right, and I agree with you.

MS. RICE: -- which were evidence.

MR. ROONEY: But I don't know who to believe in the news anymore. So my question to you is, like, in your official capacity, with regard to what you had been briefed by actually the Intelligence Community, was there anything that came across your desk that was official documentation which showed coordination -- you referred, I think, to -- I forget the guy's name -- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But was there anything official that you saw in your capacity in the prior administration that showed actual coordination between the campaign? Not what we've been seeing in the news, not what we've heard about at cocktail parties, but in your official capacity.

MS. RICE: To the best of my recollection, there wasn't anything smoking, but there were some things that gave me pause. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Right. And that's --

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Did you see evidence of the deal? Like, when we hear about -- go ahead.

MS. RICE: I don't mean to --

MR. ROONEY: No, go ahead.

MS. RICE: Forgive me for interrupting. [REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: So that, I think, answers your specific question.

MR. ROONEY: Yes.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

And then you combine that with what was in the public domain, with --

MR. ROONEY: Yeah.

MS. RICE: -- you know, Candidate Trump talking about how much he admires Putin and, you know --

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: -- how great relations are going to be. These --

MR. ROONEY: I get that.

MS. RICE: I know you get it, but I just want you to understand from my point of view. I answered your specific question --

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: -- [REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Right.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: And I agree with you. I'm just --

MS. RICE: I hear you.

MR. ROONEY: -- trying to get to what the actual proof is --

MS. RICE: I got you, and I'm just --

MR. ROONEY: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

And just one other cleanup question that Adam asked you with regard to the Don Jr. meeting. And this wasn't anything you said, but it was part of your question. I just want to make sure that I got this correct.

Mr. Schiff asked you, with regard to the meeting with the Russians and Don Jr., he said that they had varying degrees of affiliation with the Russian Government. Do we know or do we have evidence to show that the people that met with Don Jr. and others at that hotel were, in fact, affiliated with the Russian Government?

MS. RICE: I'm not in a position to answer that question. I didn't know of that meeting when --

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: -- I was in office, and I don't know what is known about it in

[REDACTED]

intelligence circles now.

MR. ROONEY: Okay.

MS. RICE: So I just -- I can't help you on that.

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah, just real quick, Madam Ambassador. When you
were talking about [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: So let me try to be more precise. If I wasn't, I apologize.

First of all, I'm only speaking about my official capacity.

MR. CONAWAY: Right.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

So that's what I was receiving --

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. And so, is it your best --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: Yeah, yeah. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: I can't answer that. I mean, give me one second here. So I was getting what I was getting in what was provided to me orally and in writing by the Intelligence Community. And separate, as I discussed with Mr. Rooney, was what was in the public domain that I --

MR. CONAWAY: Right, right, right.

MS. RICE: -- also match with that. I'm leaving that aside.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: Gotcha.

One other thing. To the conversation we were talking about, Billington or Billingsly, whatever the guy's name --

MS. RICE: Billingsly.

MR. CONAWAY: Billingsly -- and the things that were going on, you mentioned [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] And I --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: Right. And then you focused in on December and January. I was just wondering --

MS. RICE: No, I was trying to answer that over the course of the year --

MR. CONAWAY: Oh, okay.

MS. RICE: -- and not just December or during the transition.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] You asked who, or somebody asked who --

MR. CONAWAY: Right, right.

MS. RICE: -- and I then tried to be precise to the extent that I could recall.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: No, no, no.

MR. CONAWAY: -- with the transition and all that.

MS. RICE: No.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Thank you.

[REDACTED] Minority, back to you.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you.

Is it alarming to you that the FBI knew that the hacking was going on by Russia back in September -- let's just say for discussion purposes July to September 2015, when they started alerting the DNC, but you were not informed about it by anyone in the IC and, in fact, heard about it by news medias in June

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

of 2016?

MS. RICE: Well, I wouldn't have necessarily expected to hear about it from the IC. We might have been told, had they chosen to tell us, by the Justice Department on behalf of the FBI or by the FBI directly.

As I understand it -- I don't know this with perfect certainty -- this was something that was occurring -- the discussions with the DNC were occurring in FBI channels. I'm not sure the extent to which they had briefed the rest of the Intelligence Community on this or not.

Am I surprised or alarmed? You know, I never like to read anything in the press before it's briefed to me that has any national security significance. So I'm never happy when that happens. It unfortunately happened and continues to happen more than, I'm sure, I liked or other policymakers would like.

I wasn't particularly alarmed that the FBI hadn't shared that with us, and I'm not especially alarmed in retrospect -- although it would've been maybe nice to have a jump on this -- that -- because the FBI engages with actors outside of the U.S. Government who have been hacked all the time, as does DHS. And they are, as I understand it -- even though they're not necessarily involved in an investigation, they are trying to advise these entities, whether they're private-sector companies or think tanks or other forms of nongovernmental organizations, what to do.

When there have been hacks of U.S. Government infrastructure, I absolutely would expect to be promptly and thoroughly informed, and if it were a hack conducted by a foreign adversary, especially so. But I don't believe -- I believe there are many, many instances of foreign intrusions into nongovernmental entities in the United States that I may not have been briefed on or my colleagues

[REDACTED]

might not have been briefed on.

Now, you might say this was the DNC, you know, it was a political actor; why didn't they tell the White House of the same party? That may have been precisely why they didn't tell us.

MS. SPEIER: So, along the same lines, when President Trump was Candidate Trump, he constantly made statements about the election being rigged. And, of course, that stopped after the election, but during the campaign he said it a great deal.

Do you think that had a chilling effect on decisions the President made in conjunction with his National Security Council as to the steps that he took?

MS. RICE: I think, obviously, we were well aware that those statements were being made. We were puzzled and dismayed by them. We saw no evidence to back them up. And we certainly did not want to act in a way that played into the public's fears or to a campaign's line that the elections would somehow be compromised.

But above and beyond that specific concern, we were very mindful of a broader concern that the President was very focused on and we were all very focused on, which was to try to maximize the potential for the public to consume any actions that the administration took for purposes of national security and any statements we made that we thought were necessitated by national security -- we wanted to make sure they were not digested in a partisan way. We put very, very high emphasis on not acting in a way that could be perceived as political or favoring one candidate or the other.

And, you know, I can't overstate the extent to which that was an important consideration. Do I consider that chilling? No, but it was important. It would've

been counterproductive for the administration or the President taking action that was designed to protect the integrity of our national electoral process, which is obviously a national treasure and a bipartisan concern, and have that be consumed and misconstrued and manipulated for partisan, political purposes.

We were aware of the potential for that. That potential was arguably heightened by some of the statements that had been made about the potential for the elections to be rigged. And we were concerned about that.

MS. SPEIER: Any doubt in your mind that WikiLeaks is a cutout for Russia?

MS. RICE: No doubt that it has been used by Russia as a cutout. I don't know that that's its only purpose.

MS. SPEIER: Okay.

And this is my last question. In hindsight, what should have been done differently?

MS. RICE: By the administration? I tried to answer that, but let me recap. And this is obviously just my opinion, and others may respectfully disagree.

I think that we handled the deterrent, the attribution, the public statements as best we could. I think that we worked up, as we should have, a full range of punitive responses and had those ready to go at any point in this process if we needed to utilize them. I think it was correct not to punish before the election.

The one area where I have lingering questions in my own mind about whether what we did was sufficient was, as I said, on the economic sanctions piece of the punitive measures that we adopted in December. And I still don't have a clear view in my mind as to whether we got that right or wrong, but I wonder, with the benefit of hindsight, whether we would have, in retrospect, been

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better served by taking some of the more robust economic sanctions options that the Treasury Department was very hesitant to embark upon because of their likely knock-on effects to affect our system, our financial system, and the European financial system.

Because I do think that we have every reason to be concerned that the Russians or other adversaries might attempt to do this again in the future. And I do think that we need to make clear, as a Nation, that the cost for doing so will be significant. But we would've -- at least if you believe the Treasury Department analysis, and I did -- would've done so at considerable risk and harm to ourselves as well. And I think that's true today.

So if you ask me what we need to do now, I think it's vitally important that the work you're doing and the work that the Senate is doing and that Mr. Mueller is doing reach a very definitive, high-confidence, unified conclusion about what the Russians did and make it public and dispel any ambiguity or downplaying of what the Russians did and the potential future threat.

I think the best inoculation we have against this in the future is for the public to know what the Russians are up to and why and that we are witting of it and prepared to guard against it. And I'm very concerned that, if you all don't reach a strong and unified conclusion, and the same in the Senate, that the public will be lulled into misunderstanding the significance of this and the potential for it to happen again, thus making ourselves more vulnerable.

I also think our best -- I'm sorry to editorialize here, but since I may not have another opportunity, I think our best defense against aggression and intrusion and hostility by a foreign adversary is our domestic unity. And if we can't agree on a bipartisan basis about a foreign threat of this magnitude to our very democracy

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and our institutions -- it could affect any party and anybody on the ballot from, you know, the President down to local officials -- then I think we're in deep trouble as a Nation and as a world leader.

MS. SPEIER: Thank you.

I yield back.

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Quigley?

MR. QUIGLEY: Sorry if we seem fixated on the part about sounding the alarm, Madam Ambassador, but you have to appreciate the fact that when Secretary Johnson testified in open session he said that -- I believe the word he used was the administration was "influenced" by the fact that Candidate Trump had said the election was rigged, and they wanted to -- words to the effect that you have used -- not be seen as attempting to influence the election.

In your mind, though, looking back, was the decision to make the announcement delayed in any timeframe at all because of those concerns, making absolutely sure in your minds? And was the way that it was described -- "soften" may be the wrong word, but -- I understand the good-heart intention of what the administration was trying to do, but looking back after the fact, it had the effect of minimizing it, to an extent, compared to what it could have been in letting people know and having time to respond to it.

MS. RICE: Well, with all due respect, I don't agree.

First of all, the announcement was very plain, it was stark, on October 7th, and it should have been consumed as such by the American public and the media and Congress, frankly.

We faced a remarkable degree of skepticism as we briefed some Members of Congress and as we tried to brief the secretaries of the 50 States about the

significance of this threat. Some were skeptical. Some called us political. Some basically accused us of lying. Others suggested that our motives were political. That is not only false and offensive, parenthetically, but, I think, inhibited our response as a collective, as a Nation.

I wish that we had gotten a strong and early bipartisan statement by the big four. I think that would have very much helped the public digest this as a serious and nonpartisan concern and insulated anybody against the concern that the administration was playing politics.

I wish that we had had a [REDACTED] assessment sooner than the end of September. Lord knows we pushed for one, but we wanted it good and not just fast, and we were not in the business of telling the Intelligence Community what they should say or even when they should say it.

Those were the things that were the gating steps that we were seeking prior to a public attribution. Do I wish it could have happened a couple of, 3 weeks earlier? Yes. But it wasn't because we were concerned about allegations of rigging or anything like that. We didn't pull our punches in terms of how we made the statement because of Candidate Trump's statements about the election's potentially being rigged.

MR. QUIGLEY: Thank you.

Your understanding prior to June of '16 of the Russians' relationship with WikiLeaks or Guccifer, I mean, what did you know? Because I want to ask what you knew after that, what you learned after that. But prior to June of last year, what was your understanding of the Russian relationship with either Guccifer or WikiLeaks?

MS. RICE: I don't have a precise recollection of, you know, what the

[REDACTED]

nature of the Russian relationship with WikiLeaks was. You know, WikiLeaks was, by that time and long before that time, viewed by us as a hostile, adversarial entity that was acting to undermine U.S. interests across many spheres and that of other countries as well.

And, put simply, we knew that when it came to matters of stealing intelligence and disseminating it that Russia was not our friend. Witness its harboring of Snowden to this day.

So I don't remember specifically, you know, detailed information underscoring that Russia and WikiLeaks were acting in unison. But I do know that, you know, Russia took full advantage of nefarious actors like Snowden, like WikiLeaks to work against our interests and that of other countries.

[REDACTED] You have about 30 seconds, sir.

MR. QUIGLEY: As quickly as you can, after June of 2016, what did you understand their role to be?

MS. RICE: We've gotten far more granularity on WikiLeaks' relationship to Russia and its negative role. We viewed them as a principal but not the only outlet for the hacked Russian materials.

And, you know, we saw in the public realm Trump associates touting WikiLeaks, in fact, the President, when he was a candidate himself, praising WikiLeaks, when the rest of us, everybody in this room, knew that WikiLeaks was our adversary and was in the hands of our adversaries. So that was another strange aspect of this, to say the least.

MR. QUIGLEY: Thank you.

MR. GOWDY: Ambassador Rice, I'm going to editorialize just for about 15 seconds, and this will be attributed to me and not to you.

[REDACTED]

But it seems like President Obama was confronted with a fact pattern where he didn't want to overreact and create that dynamic with the public, and if he underreacted or was perceived to have underreacted, then he'd be subject to criticism after the election.

So I get the difficulty that he had in balancing how do I react without eliciting from the Russians even more negative actions. I get that. So he made a decision.

But somebody else during this same cycle made another decision, and that would be the Director of the FBI. In an unrelated case that, in the time -- I believe it was July of 2016 -- he cited a meeting between the then-Attorney General and a spouse of one of the candidates as the reason for him appropriating a decision to himself. He has since suggested that it was also material learned during the course of the Russia investigation.

MS. RICE: That what was? I'm sorry.

MR. GOWDY: That his decision to appropriate the charging decision away from the Department of Justice on to the FBI was at least in part based on what he knew connected with the Russia investigation.

Do you have any idea what he was talking about?

MS. RICE: No, put simply. I don't know what the FBI -- well, as I said, I was not aware formally that there was an FBI investigation at any point during my time as National Security Advisor. I might have assumed or suspected, but I never knew for sure. Secondly, I didn't know -- certainly didn't know that one existed going back to June or July. And so I don't know how those things might have interplayed in the Director's mind.

MR. GOWDY: Well, I don't either, despite having talked with him a couple

[REDACTED]

of different times.

Initially, we were led to believe that a chance meeting on the tarmac led him to want to take the decision away from Attorney General Lynch and make the decision himself in the press conference, which is pretty unusual for a law enforcement agent to do.

Since then, he has said that there was information gathered during this investigation into Russia's attempts to interfere with our election that was really the basis of him appropriating that decision away from Loretta Lynch onto himself.

In fact -- because I made a note when you were testifying previously that one of the things we were worried about is that Russia would take information, falsify it, and then disseminate it, and the public would not know what was true, what was not true, even though all of it was ill-gotten.

You don't recall any discussion at the administration level in June, July, or August about Director Comey taking that decision away from the Department of Justice for himself because of --

MS. RICE: Stop right there. I don't have any knowledge of anything related to Director Comey's decision about how to approach the Clinton email investigation. Nothing. Never crossed my desk. Never had a conversation. Much less its relationship to the Russia stuff.

MR. GOWDY: All right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: All right.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: That I remember. I don't want to suggest that was exhaustive.

MR. GOWDY: No. But are there any other names I should add to that list?

MS. RICE: Not that I can pull off the top of my head without the benefit of reviewing what I saw back then.

MR. GOWDY: All right. So we're going to go with those three names. And this will be the line of distinction in my mind: pre-election, post-election.

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: All right.

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Yes. Only.

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: That I saw?

MR. GOWDY: Yes, ma'am, or were briefed on.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: As I recall.

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Both.

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: I'm not sure.

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: Okay.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Not that I can recall. But, you know, I hate to be -- I'm not trying to be flip here, but there are a whole bunch of people that weren't part of the official transition that were still playing in the Trump universe even during the transition and beyond. I don't know, you know, what role Manafort or Stone or any of these other people, Page or whoever, may have had on the margins that nevertheless, you know, fed its way into the campaign or the transition. I just don't know. But it was not, you know, as tight an operation as you might normally see.

MR. GOWDY: I'm going to ask you a question about the unveiling of a U.S. person's information with respect to masking, but it is with respect to Russia.

Did you make any request to identify U.S. persons with your motive or the impetus behind your request being the investigation into what Russia was doing or had done?

MS. RICE: So, just to be clear, when you say "investigation," you mean law enforcement investigation?

MR. GOWDY: I mean just better understanding.

MS. RICE: You mean the Intelligence Community -- trying to understand

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

from the point of view from a policymaker or with the Intelligence Community what was going on?

MR. GOWDY: And I hate to say "either," but -- I know that you don't have a law enforcement function. I'm not assigning that to you.

MS. RICE: I wasn't trying to impute one to myself.

MR. GOWDY: Well, I guess what I'm trying to ask, as politely as I can, is, were any of your unmasking requests connected to Russia, and did any of your unmasking requests lead to a better understanding of what Russia was doing or had done?

MS. RICE: Well, with all due respect, I don't have specific recall of my unmasking requests. I'm sure that I probably asked for identities related to Russia. And I did so primarily for two reasons.

One was to understand as best I could the universe of information that was available to me, as the person responsible to the President for national security, about what the Russians may have been up to with respect to interfering in our election. That was obviously a very important and sensitive topic, and if I saw something that included a masked identity that I thought might shed light on that, I would want to know.

The other reason -- and this would have been relevant both during the campaign and the transition -- is I would be very concerned, whether it related to Russia or some other topic, about non-sitting government officials purporting to talk to foreign governments, particularly foreign adversaries, but not limited to adversaries, about current or future U.S. policy in a way that might have undermined or compromised the sitting administration's ability to conduct foreign policy on behalf of the United States.

[REDACTED]

As I said earlier, we have one government at a time. It gets complicated inherently during a transition. It becomes even more complicated if members of the transition or people associated with the transition are communicating with foreigners about policy in a way that is clearly antithetical to the sitting administration's policy. It's even more concerning if they're doing so secretly. And so we had, to be very honest, ample reason for concern about that.

MR. GOWDY: One of my colleagues made reference to the elephant in the room, that all the Republicans were dying to ask you a question. I actually wasn't dying to ask you the question. I wasn't going to ask you a question. I think Ms. Speier asked whether or not there were any unmaskings done for political purposes. I wasn't going to ask that question.

But I will ask, as a followup to hers, how would you define a political purpose?

MS. RICE: So that's a great question. That's my question. I've been accused of all sorts of things in the public domain over the last many months, including being a criminal, which I don't appreciate. And I have no idea what the hell a political unmasking is.

I mean, what I did in the conduct of my job in order to ensure that I was acting on the information I was provided and doing so responsibly was to be sure I understood what I was reading and, to the extent that I understood it, that I was putting in process the actions that were necessary to protect our national interests and our national security. That's the only reason, ever, that I asked for the identity of the U.S. person.

I don't know how one would use that information for a political purpose. We've asked ourselves that question many times. It doesn't make any sense to

[REDACTED]

me. So if you all understand, just for my prurient interest since I've been a party to some of these accusations, I'd love to know what that means.

MR. GOWDY: Well, I actually think in a roundabout way you've already answered the question, that you answered it very early on. You said what a negative impact leaks have on the security of our country, that you don't do it, that you have never done it, so take you out of it.

MS. RICE: I get why leaks are a problem.

MR. GOWDY: Pardon me?

MS. RICE: I get why leaks are a problem.

MR. GOWDY: Well, but if the unmasking is connected to the leak --

MS. RICE: But I haven't seen any connection established there.

MR. GOWDY: Well, and that, you know, ostensibly is part of what the committee is doing.

You were very forceful, because I wrote down your answer: Never done it, not appropriate, harmful to the country. So I'm not asking about you. Are you aware of anyone that has disseminated classified information to an unauthorized consumer?

MS. RICE: No. And if I were, I probably would have reported it.

MR. CONAWAY: Just real quick --

MS. RICE: Certainly would have reported it.

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] one, would you have normally have said, who was that citizen? Would you have asked for an unmasking of that citizen in that circumstance?

MS. RICE: It depends on the substance of the conversation. If it looked

[REDACTED]

like it was a casual --

MR. CONAWAY: If he's calling for a pizza, I got that.

MS. RICE: If he was talking about U.S. national security issues, I probably would have.

MR. CONAWAY: Okay.

MS. RICE: I think that, frankly, I would have been remiss not to.

MR. CONAWAY: I would agree. I would agree.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CONAWAY: Okay. Thank you.

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RUEMLER: We saw them this morning.

MS. RICE: In fact, we did. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I'm happy to respond to it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. GOWDY: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: Well, I mean, you can ask me what you want to ask me about it. I don't know why you would ask me about that.

MR. GOWDY: I don't want to, but --

MS. RICE: Okay.

MR. GOWDY: -- I wanted to give you the right, if you wanted to respond.

MS. RICE: Since you were kind enough to share it with me?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

That goes straight to one of my principal concerns as National Security Advisor, about how we maintain the integrity of one government at a time and one U.S. foreign policy at a time when there were there were all kinds of things happening that were not in official channels.

[REDACTED]

no patience for that. I think that is un-American.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] -- and you all will find other examples of this. It was a problem that we had to manage. It was not something we appreciated. They did not use the normal channels that any administration would use to have their phone calls transcribed, go through the State Department, have records.

Part of the reason why I had a hard time meeting with General Flynn during the transition, I had to chase him, was because he was so busy meeting foreigners. And I knew he was meeting foreigners because the foreigners were then coming to meet me, as they normally would during the course of their foreign visits.

So, you know, it was a big mash-up, a big mess, not of our making. And it

[REDACTED]

was all we could do to try to conduct U.S. foreign policy in an effective way when we had a whole lot of stray voltage coming at us.

MR. SCHIFF: Ambassador, just one followup question on that, and then I want to turn it over to Mr. Swalwell.

In the category of one government at a time, were you surprised, after the administration did level sanctions against Russia over its interference with the election, that the Russians did not reciprocate?

MS. RICE: Yes.

MR. SCHIFF: Was that atypical? Surprising? Shocking? What was your reaction to that?

MS. RICE: We were surprised. I think we all were surprised. We had anticipated that they would. That's why we were calibrating quite carefully, you know, how many we PNG'd, you know, how many facilities we closed, which ones, blah, blah, blah. So, yes, I think we were all surprised that there was not a more robust or any response from the Russians.

MR. SCHIFF: Do you think there's any conceivable explanation for that apart from the Russians having the expectation that the incoming administration would essentially do away with the sanctions that were imposed by the Obama administration?

MS. RICE: I can't be certain, but, obviously, when there was no Russian response and when the President-elect tweeted, you know, that Putin was really smart not to respond, it raised all kinds of questions in any knowledgeable person's mind.

Why would they not respond? What were they hoping for or expecting subsequently? Had they had communications with the transition team about what

the new administration might do in the future to undo or otherwise address the sanctions and other "grievances" that the Russians had, in quotes? You know, that was bizarre.

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Swalwell.

MR. SWALWELL: Thank you, Mr. Schiff.

And thank you, Madam Ambassador. I guess we're near the end, and so this will be the putting-to-bed part of some of the questioning.

Would you agree that Russia's attack was a violation of U.S. sovereignty?

MS. RICE: Absolutely.

MR. SWALWELL: And you talked about some of the allegations that have been leveled against you with respect to this phrase, "unmasking." And with your experience at the NSC, do you agree that the White House today actually holds all of the records necessary to prove if you did unlawfully unmask and that they could show the world that?

MS. RICE: First of all, just for the record, I did not unlawfully unmask. There's not -- first of all, to be clear, unmasking, as you all like to call it, deminimization is not unlawful. Leaking is unlawful. And there is a big distinction. I did one. I unmasked when it was necessary for me to do my job. I never leaked. So, first point.

MR. SWALWELL: But would you agree that the White House holds those records?

MS. RICE: No, I don't know that they hold those records.

I mean, this is really important. When I made a request for the identity of a U.S. person, I did so one-on-one with my briefer. There were no records that I kept or that I'm aware of that anybody in the White House would have the capacity

[REDACTED]

to create, because nobody else, beyond me and my briefer, knew what I had asked for.

So my briefer, he or she, would take that request back to the originating agency. And the originating agencies, as you well know, have a whole process that they go through to decide whether that identity would be provided to me or any other requesting official. And then it comes back to me and me alone, orally, and not for further dissemination unless there's a subsequent process to decide that it should be further disseminated.

So I wouldn't have any reason to understand how the White House could have such documents unless they were provided to the White House by the IC.

MR. SWALWELL: And have you been informed by the Department of Justice that you are under investigation for doing anything unlawful?

MS. RICE: No.

MR. SWALWELL: Okay.

Speaking of --

MS. RICE: I hope you're not going to tell me something I don't know.

MR. SWALWELL: No. No.

Speaking of investigations, you talked about Director Comey and the FBI. Is it fair to say that, as the National Security Advisor, you were not read in on active, ongoing investigations that the Department of Justice or the FBI were conducting?

MS. RICE: Absolutely, that's the case. Those were law enforcement matters. They were not things that I was privy to unless the Justice Department chose to share them with me. The Justice Department's normal contact in the White House, at least in the Obama administration, for anything to do with law

[REDACTED]

enforcement, criminal stuff was the White House Counsel.

There were rare occasions where the Justice Department would judge that it was necessary and appropriate to consult national security officials, including me, in which case they might do so, but it was a one-way street.

MR. SWALWELL: Now, on March 1st of this year -- I think the majority has referenced it -- there was a New York Times article. And in addition to talking about what the Obama administration was allegedly doing, it also mentioned contacts between the Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, then-Senator Sessions, and the Russian Ambassador.

Now, just 3 days later, President Trump launched a series of tweets claiming that President Obama had tapped his phones. A tweet on March 4 at 6:35 a.m. said, "Terrible. Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"

At 6:49 a.m., a few minutes later, he says, "Is it legal for a sitting President to be 'wiretapping' a race for President prior to an election? Turned down by a court earlier. A NEW LOW!"

Then he says, just at 6:52, "I bet a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October just prior to the election."

[12:59 p.m.]

MR. SWALWELL: And then they continue just 10 minutes later: "How low has President Obama gone to tapp," t-a-p-p, "my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!"

Are you aware of any unlawful intelligence collection on U.S. citizens during the time in the Obama administration?

MS. RICE: No.

MR. SWALWELL: Did the Obama administration tap President Trump's or Candidate Trump's phones during the campaign or transition or any other time?

MS. RICE: No, not to my knowledge, and, as far as I can tell, not to the knowledge of anybody else inside the administration.

MR. SWALWELL: On April 3rd, 2017, The Washington Post published an article: "Blackwater Founder Held Secret Seychelles Meeting to Establish Trump-Putin Back Channel." Do you remember that story?

MS. RICE: I do.

MR. SWALWELL: When the story broke, it referenced an Erik Prince, and Mr. Prince accused the Obama administration of revealing his identity in intelligence surveillance reports. He stated: They tried to create some nexus to Russia for me doing a business meeting somewhere.

MS. RICE:

MR. SWALWELL: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SWALWELL: And, finally, as the former National Security Advisor and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, what do you make of a sitting President accusing a former President of wiretapping or surveilling them as a candidate or as a President-elect, with respect to our foreign relationships or just domestic policy?

MS. RICE: I find it outrageous. It was false. It was defamatory. It was a distraction. And I think it did harm to the United States internationally by making us look like we were not serious.

MR. SWALWELL: How would you describe the integrity or work product of then-Director James Comey, from your observations?

MS. RICE: His integrity?

MR. SWALWELL: Yes.

MS. RICE: Unquestioned.

MR. SWALWELL: I yield back. Thank you.

MR. SCHIFF: We're at 1 o'clock. Will you indulge us with a last few questions?

MS. RICE: Yes, because, as Kathy said, this is your one shot.

MR. SCHIFF: Okay. We only have a few final questions. I just wanted to follow up on something Mr. Swalwell was asking about.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As I said, I don't put a great deal of stock in that.

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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with foreign officials during the transition. There's been an occasional precedent with the Mexican, which has its own origins. But President-elect Trump very quickly after being elected met with Prime Minister Abe and had a meeting in New York with Prime Minister Abe. And we formally but privately protested to the President-elect's team -- I think Dennis McDonough (ph) spoke to Reince Priebus -- because we can't have -- again, one President at a time. We can't have various foreign officials coming and talking to the President-elect and may or may not be talking to the President and conducting policy discussions. It's just a mess.

And the Trump team agreed to have no more head-of-state level meetings. And, to my knowledge, they didn't have more after the Abe meeting, even though there were lots of folks trying to get in the door.

So, actually, I think when the Crown Prince came, he did not see President-elect Trump. He saw people around President-elect Trump, if I'm not mistaken. He did not see President Obama. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: Ambassador, if I understood, you said originally --

MS. RICE: Far more information than you all sought.

MR. SCHIFF: Well, you indicated that initially at the time, you thought it was either, if I'm understanding correctly, either related to your visit to the UAE or

[REDACTED]

either related to wanting to conceal the fact that they weren't that interested in meeting with President Obama now that he was outgoing.

MS. RICE: And that he was not being succeeded by the person they expected him to be succeeded by.

MR. SCHIFF: [REDACTED]

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MS. RICE: When did that happen?

MR. SCHIFF: When did that happen, [REDACTED]

MS. RICE: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. SCHIFF: Mr. Heck

MS. RICE: I don't know why they couldn't wait.

MR. HECK: Madam Ambassador, thank you so much for giving so generously of your time today.

So, when we talk about the Russian interference in the 2016 Presidential election, the overwhelming majority of the conversation is about the misappropriation of information, its timely distribution or revelation that seeks to influence, sometimes disinformation, modified and disinformation propagated in an attempt to impact the outcome.

But a small minority of what we talk about, although we have here but in passing, were the efforts to penetrate the election systems. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was represented to us that we didn't blow the whistle on that because, at least in part, they may have been wanting us to do that in an effort to undermine the election process, so why shine a spotlight on it?

MS. RICE: Hold up. Just I want to make sure I understand what you're saying because you seem to be conveying new information to me.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. HECK: No. I'm not sure what the technical definition of penetration is, but it was represented to us actually in open hearing that they were in, in all likelihood, but made no modifications.

MS. RICE: All right.

MR. HECK: I don't know if that's what you meant by knocking, but --

MS. RICE: That's what I would call knocking, but not getting in and manipulating the substance of --

MR. HECK: Getting in and manipulating are two different things.

MS. RICE: Right.

MR. HECK: So I actually lose sleep over this latter issue. And, again, it's just a tiny part of what we talk about in terms of the nature of their intrusion in the 2016 election, what they tried to do or flirted with doing, whatever.

But I guess my question to you is, for whatever reason that we don't talk about this more -- namely, they didn't manipulate or don't seem to have or maybe we have a lot of confidence that our systems are hard enough that they cannot manipulate -- even the prospect seems to me to be powerfully more dangerous than all the kind of propaganda things and illegal extraction of information outside the election system.

So what I'm really asking is what your level of concern is over this aspect of what might be done prospectively because part of our charge is what do we do going forward, and, personally, I don't feel like we're putting enough of a spotlight on this part. Maybe you can help me sleep better by just saying it's not that big of a concern, but I'm deeply worried.

MS. RICE: I can't tell you to sleep better on this. I share your concern. It was a very real aspect of the administration's concern, as we were looking at what

[REDACTED]

the Russians might do in the wake of the warning. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

It's why we put such stock in the statement that we sought from the Big Four congressional leaders. And that's why, you know, we watched very carefully over the course of the months between the warning the President issued to Vladimir Putin in early September and the election for any evidence that that might be what they were doing, because that would have prompted us to go full punitive right then and there.

I still worry, as you seem to be also, that they might do such things in the future. And I worry that our States are not sufficiently hardened. Maybe they have taken subsequent steps since I've left government that I'm not aware of that would give me greater confidence, but I do worry about this. And I think it's a very serious concern, and I hope it's a priority for you as you think about recommendations for the future.

MR. HECK: Thank you.

MR. SCHIFF: Thank you.

[REDACTED]

MR. ROONEY: Thank you, Ambassador. I think that's all we've got for today and forever.

[Whereupon, at 1:20 p.m., the interview was concluded.]